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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Wednesday 7 March 2012

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mercredi 7 mars 2012

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 7 March 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 7 mars 2012

The House met at 0900.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY GENERATING FACILITIES AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX, DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 5, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2012 / Projet de loi 34, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2012 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to stand on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to talk about Bill 34. I want to begin by talking a bit about what happened yesterday in our debate about the opposition day motion with respect to Toronto subways. We had a lot of interesting and heated debate in this House, and I'm sure some of the quotes that we heard from that side of the House are going to ring loud and clear throughout this session because it was very interesting to see Liberal MPPs who actually support a subway, and said that quite frequently in their speech, end up voting against it. It's pretty interesting to see that.

I want to draw your attention to one of the quotes that we heard yesterday from the member from Etobicoke Centre. She said this: "As difficult as democracy is, as messy as it can be, it's far better than benevolent dictatorship, or dictatorship of any kind, where you just go in and say, 'Because I know best, this is what you're going to do.'" That's what the member for Etobicoke Centre said yesterday in debate. I find it very interesting when we take that quote and bring it into this House, into this debate, knowing what happened right here in the city of Toronto with respect to the G20 summit.

If there is any example of dictatorship and the invoking of what we call a police state, it was that precise time. Regulation 233/10 is exactly this. It's an example of a dictatorship, as opposed to democracy. So, in light of that debate, in light of that discussion, why did that government, sitting across the aisle from us in the opposition, decide it was okay to essentially overrule or, in secret, talk about a regulation that has some fundamental implications for civil liberties in the province of Ontario?

In addition, last week during debate on this very topic, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities spoke quite eloquently about human rights abuses and everything of that nature—and, you know, I applaud him for the work that he actually does on this file. But then he started to do something that has become all too much of a pattern. What he decided to do was, he laid the blame on the federal government. This is a pattern that we've seen from this government. They take all the credit for anything that happens that's good, but never accept any blame for anything that has gone wrong. As members from the NDP have consistently asked, particularly on this file, we've never heard an apology. We've never heard an "I'm sorry" for what happened during that debate, that whole issue. We still haven't heard that apology from the government.

I'm learning quite quickly that there are a lot of contrasts in this business, and I want to highlight one in particular here. Last week when I spoke in the House I talked about Mackenzie King being a Liberal hero, being a person that they like on that side, and the key to his success being that he never let his left hand understand what his right hand was doing. We can't get the connection between two distinct events. It's the key to Liberal success; it's the key to why Mackenzie King was the longest-serving Prime Minister in Canadian history.

So let's do that same process with this debate, Mr. Speaker. On the one hand you have the G20: the incidents that happened here in Toronto, the mass arrests that occurred, the trying to quelch lawlessness that the government allowed the police to do during that whole episode; and you contrast that with what happened in Caledonia, the lawlessness that happened there. We had, on the one hand, heavy police involvement, we had mass arrests, we disrupted civil liberties, and on the other hand we let that situation in Caledonia fester and fester until—chaos.

I remember watching the newscast after the G20 protests, watching what happened in Caledonia in our news-

casts, and you know what, Mr. Speaker? It didn't look like Ontario. It didn't look like Ontario when cars were put up in flames or police cars were put up in flames. These are pictures of our Ontario, the great Ontario, the Ontario that is the glue that holds Confederation together. These aren't the images that represent our province, and frankly, it's an embarrassment to know what happened with those incidents and the fact that we can't even come to an agreement on how to deal with issues that have significant importance to the people living in those communities.

Frankly, when it comes to protecting the city of Toronto, excessive force was used, but when we're talking about protecting a community like Caledonia it seemed like there was a hands-off approach: "Let the two parties deal with those issues." I think that's one of the tragedies that we've seen from this government.

One of the issues that we talk about with respect to this issue is the secrecy: How do we have such massive police powers bestowed on that force without having a discussion or debate or a vote in this Legislature? That's exactly what regulation 233/10 had done: It was done behind closed doors; it was done at cabinet, the whole cabinet sitting around a nice beautiful table, including the members for Peterborough, Ottawa Centre, Ottawa–Orléans, Mississauga–Streetsville, Willowdale, Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Ajax–Pickering and Algoma–Manitoulin—lots of people at the table to discuss what was going to happen with respect to this.

Mr. Speaker, we're in a democracy. We need to know exactly what we're talking about. We need to know the information to have informed and reasoned debate. We try and get that information at any given stage. Last week, certainly, was a deadline that we saw with respect to my motion on hospital expansion projects and tabling that plan. We passed a motion in this House to table that plan by March 1, 2012. We still don't have that plan tabled in this House, the detail that we'd expect. It's just a pattern of secrecy, of keeping the opposition in the dark; keeping the people of the province of Ontario in the dark.

We're seeing it currently with the stuff that's happening at Ornge where, on the one hand, we desire to get to the bottom of the situation at Ornge and on the other hand, we're not giving this Legislature the tools to do that. We're not providing witnesses with the protections that they'd expect to get them to freely come forward with the information that they need.

This is a democracy; a democracy that we have built through hard work. Frankly, we have to defend it at every given stage, and talking about this bill and what happened here in the province of Ontario is a necessity to getting to the bottom, to making sure that we improve the democracy that we've come to know.

0910

In terms of when I spoke last on this, when the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke talked very elaborately and eloquently and even humorously on this topic—although it's not a funny matter, he really did entertain us at that debate—I questioned the fact that there needed to be some semblance of understanding what "legitimacy" and "authority" meant. I decided to hit the textbooks to provide some background on what's happening here. Let me give you a couple of quotes.

First of all, "Governmental power without legitimacy is only coercion or force...." This comes from Dickerson and Flanagan, the 7th edition.

"Power without legitimacy represents coercion—naked force."

"Coercion is the deliberate subjection of one will to another through fear of harm or threats of harm."

"When coercion is applied, compliance is not voluntary but results from fear of unpleasant consequences."

If we look at what happened during the G20 protests outside here at this Legislature and throughout the city, particularly the core of the city of Toronto, we saw instances of coercion. We saw instances where authority was applied without the necessary legitimacy. That's what this bill seeks to rectify. We understand that it seeks to rectify it because we don't want to have a situation like this happen again.

At the heart of it is having a free and loving province of Ontario that we all have come to know and love. That's why we sit in this place each and every day, talking about the future of this province. And we need to make sure that we can do that freely, openly and democratically. I'm going to support Bill 34.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Davenport—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy to rise today to speak to this issue. I was among the thousands of people who gathered on the lawn at Queen's Park on that day. I didn't come to the lawn accidentally—my colleague yesterday mentioned that he kind of showed up to see what was happening. I came intentionally, because I shared the concerns of thousands of people who gathered there.

I come from a generation of people who grew up with a real concern about a changing globe, a globe that sees less and less democracy, a globe where we see growing corporate power. We've been sounding alarm bells on this for years and years.

To me, what I saw on that day, starting out, was a real optimism, a real hope about restoring democracy to the planet and bringing it right here to the Legislature. I saw thousands of people. I saw students, teachers, union members, folks who were unemployed, people who were struggling and people who were there because they were concerned about the environment. I saw, for the most part, people who were willing to demonstrate their concern by marching peacefully through the streets.

What I hoped I would see that day would be that folks there would see their concerns about democracy met seriously, and what happened instead was that people found that their concerns were more real than they could have

imagined. They saw brutal police force. They saw an elected government that abandoned them and that sanctioned police brutality on that day.

I'd like to talk more about this, this morning, but this comes far too late. We need to have this debate, but we needed to have it right then. We have not heard an apology from this government to constituents in this city, to small businesses who suffered that day and to people who were detained unlawfully and who were beaten. We need to hear this government come clean about their role and make sure this doesn't happen again, ever, in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I listened with great interest to what the member from Cambridge had to say, and it takes much more than two minutes to respond to the number of concerns he brought forward, but let me just make a couple of points.

Number one, no government ever directs the police to do anything. Policing matters are totally within the jurisdiction of the police. Whether we're talking about a local government—a police commission does not tell the police how to carry out its function, and it's the same thing here. So I just want to correct that. A lot of things happened on that particular weekend. Certainly, one of the ways to resolve some of those issues is to pass this particular law.

What does this law basically do? It basically makes sure that our court system, the judicial system that we all rely on and that we're all very proud of in this country, is carried out in the best possible fashion. In order to do that, the court facilities have to be secure. Exactly the same thing can be said for our nuclear facilities as well, because we've all seen what's happened in some parts of the world. You know what can happen with a nuclear facility. There's always the possibility, and so they have to be as secure as possible.

Let me just talk to you about what democracy is really all about. I was on a council in Kingston for 16 years and a mayor for eight years. I know of no other situation where a mayor can just say on any issue, "We're going to do this," and the council takes a direct contrary position. It just doesn't happen this way. The government of Ontario is prepared to put up $8.4 billion of our tax dollars, all of our tax dollars, in order to deal with the transit situation here in the city of Toronto, but in order for that to happen it has to be done by way of a council resolution that the majority of council, which may or may not include the mayor, agrees upon. We are prepared to invest in transit in this province, as we've said before. It's going to happen one way or another, but it's not just going to happen because a mayor wants something contrary to what his council wants.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to comment on the member for Cambridge's remarks regarding Bill 34. But before we get to that I also want to comment on the Attorney General's remarks, where he specifically stated that he wanted to make it clear that no government tells the police. But I think the question that will come out very shortly that I'm going to try to allude to is: Are the police telling the government what to do in this particular situation?

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, we saw legislation come forward or bills come forward that drastically changed the direction of a lot of actions within the province of Ontario without coming to the legislative floor. What it was in the government and information that the government received that would cause them to do this is my concern: Where did this information come from and who is directing the government to say, "We need this done and we need it done this way and we need it done in this fashion"—that's what hasn't come to light in this whole issue.

Quite frankly, it's quite surprising that they would bring one aspect of it without coming to the floor and passing the legislation and moving forward with the actions; without coming to the Legislature floor. However, when we're getting rid of it, now all of a sudden, lo and behold, we have to come to the floor to discuss it.

We need the full details and disclosure as to why and what the government felt was so necessary to come forward; that "This is going to happen." Was it the police telling the government that this is what's going to take place?

Quite frankly, coming from a policing family—my father was the chief of police in Thunder Bay. He was 33 years in policing. My grandfather on my mother's side was a chief constable in his homeland in Poland. So you get a different perspective of policing and the way that it operates. However, I'm still very concerned that that hasn't come forward yet. Why hasn't the government more or less given us some indication as to what the real reasons are as to why this was brought forward without coming to the Legislature floor? That's what this province needs to know.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: It was my privilege today to listen to the member from Cambridge. He's a relatively new member in this House, so I'm still sussing him out to see what he has to say. But I have to say that in listening to him, he was both scholarly and measured in his comments. What he had to say, I think, was absolutely essential and important: He highlighted the fact that this government has yet to apologize for their actions. I think that in his statement, that is absolutely correct. So I was somewhat taken aback when I heard the two-minute comment from the Attorney General, because I don't know what it had to do with the member from Cambridge's speech, talking about transit in Toronto.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, he talked about it.

Mr. Michael Prue: The member from Cambridge may have made a passing comment on that, but the member from Cambridge used the quotes from Dickerson and Flanagan. The member from Cambridge talked about the

role that the cabinet and the hangers-on to the cabinet were playing in conjunction with, although we don't really know the circumstances, the police and the police forces in Toronto; the decisions that were made to take away the civil liberties of thousands of Canadian citizens and Ontarians who were doing nothing more than exercising their democratic rights. I would have hoped that in the comments about the member from Cambridge, there would have been better comments from the government side than those that were proffered here today.

0920

I commend the member from Cambridge, because he was measured, he was balanced and he was asking the questions that Ontarians, and indeed all people in Canada, need to know about the events surrounding the G20. I think the member from Cambridge should continue on this file and should continue to be asking these questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Cambridge has a two-minute response.

Mr. Rob Leone: I want to thank the member for Davenport, the Attorney General, the member for Oshawa and the member for Beaches–East York for their comments. Certainly, I also listened to the Attorney General with some interest. I guess the only reason why I brought up the debate on the subway was the quote that I had previously cited. I'm going to repeat that quote, because it's certainly relevant to this debate: "As difficult as democracy is"—this is from the member for Etobicoke Centre—"as messy as it can be, it's far better than benevolent dictatorship, or dictatorship of any kind, where you just go in and say 'Because I know best, this is what you're going to do.'"

That's what the member for Etobicoke Centre said yesterday, and I wonder where the member for Etobicoke Centre was precisely when this whole discussion was secretly being talked about behind closed doors around a nice oak cabinet table. Because it's the secrecy about this—it's about keeping us in the dark. Well, Minister, I hope to soon be able to see what that cabinet table looks like, when the members of this side of the House actually form the government.

We have a situation in the province of Ontario of gross neglect of our democratic institutions. It's a pattern that we're seeing from that side of the House. It's a pattern that we in the Ontario PC Party hope to end, Mr. Speaker, because we can no longer keep people in the dark, particularly with some significant issues that we're seeing right here in the province of Ontario with respect to the promises that they made during the last election, with respect to the scandal that we're seeing at Ornge. It's a pattern that we've seen over and over again, and it won't change until that government changes, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you, Speaker. To continue from where I left off, I felt hopeful, at the beginning of that day almost two years ago, that so many people came out on a Saturday to voice their concern, not just about what was happening in Ontario but what was happening around the world. People were expressing a real concern about democracy. They were expressing a concern about lack of sovereignty and about human rights abuses and about civil liberties.

Unfortunately, our government stood up and said, "This is exactly what you should be concerned about. You should be concerned about people's civil liberties; you should be concerned about people's freedom. This is a war. This is a war on democracy, on people who want to come out and voice their concerns." The state came out that day and, in fact, ordered secretly to violate people's rights.

I think all of us at the very least would agree that we need to restore hope in the political process. None of us appreciates the fact that half the people in this province have given up on electoral politics. It's harder and harder to convince people that it matters, when we don't see transparency in our government, when we see things negotiated behind closed doors, when we continue to see things off-loaded and responsibility is not taken at any level, whether it's passed up the line to the federal government or down to the cities. We are waiting, and people in this city are waiting, for an apology from this government to take responsibility, to say, "This happened in our backyard, and we made it worse. We took a bad situation, and we made it worse."

Mr. John Yakabuski: "We?" They.

Interjection: Don't take their credit for them.

Mr. Jonah Schein: The government. Thank you.

So I think the concerns that were expressed that day—people worry that the government is not in control, that it's actually the corporations that are in control. They're worried that it's the corporations that are calling the shots. So when we try to explain to people how it is that we have a government that continues to invest in nuclear power, that won't make the public investments necessary to reduce our carbon footprint because they'd rather give money to the nuclear industry, we say, "Well, why is this happening?" Is it in the best interests of Ontarians to spend billions and billions of dollars propping up a nuclear industry and giving subsidies to big corporations? Why is it that we're losing jobs in this province, a province where jobs are walking away; where corporations can come and get a handout without any promise of job guarantees and people lose their jobs? It's no wonder that people are giving up on the political process here, and it is all of our jobs to restore faith in that process. At some point, it begins with an apology. It begins with acknowledging that there's a problem here.

I know that people look at what goes on sometimes, and they shake their heads and they say, "What is happening?" How come one day a government will vote to support more corporate tax cuts, with no strings attached, and then, a few weeks later, they turn around and say, "Oh, no, that's wrong. We won't move forward with the corporate tax cuts"? How does this happen? Where is the leadership? Where is the spine on behalf of the govern-

ment? How do you have confidence in a government that will change its mind whichever wind blows?

We were having this debate weeks ago, and the member from the Ministry of Training and Colleges, who represents a Toronto community, was saying that this wasn't a general meeting of the campfire girls going on in downtown Toronto. He was insinuating that the force that was used that day was necessary to protect against terrorists, and he used those words.

But then, years ago, back in June 30, 2010, he said that people were afraid to disagree with the Toronto police chief, even when he was wrong. He was calling out the police chief then. He says, "The police reaction to [the] last two days can only be described as bizarre." He gave good reason why a public inquiry was needed. He said, "A country that generously funds police actions and doesn't fund access to its human rights charter has forgotten its people."

Yet he comes back last week and says that police force was necessary; this wasn't the Girl Scouts here; that it was dangerous. And I beg to differ. What happened then—we had the largest mobilization of police in Canadian history, and we had the biggest mass arrest of people over that weekend too. What I saw, when people gathered on that first day here at Queen's Park, was a highly disciplined crowd of people, people who wanted to voice their concerns about what was happening with the G20. That police force was well equipped to keep things in line.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me. We have two loud sidebars going on. If you'd like to discuss things, could you go out of the chamber, please? Thank you.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you, Speaker. But instead of allowing people to voice their concerns—I should back up and say that this should never have happened in Toronto. It was just absolutely terrible planning.

I do agree with the government, in this case, that the federal government also owes this city an apology for what happened. But it should never have happened, and it was terrible planning that it happened in this city. It cost us over a billion dollars, and I know that that billion dollars could be well used to create jobs in this province, to build a transit plan in this city. There are people who desperately need the services that that money could pay for.

But I also felt bad in some ways. Because it was so poorly planned, we had this huge mobilization of police who didn't know what to do, or seemingly didn't know what to do. I think that they probably felt embarrassed after what happened, because they were set up for failure in some ways. They did not have clear direction. I think that the police force deserves to be set up in a way that they can uphold the principles of democracy and freedom of speech, and I think that in a lot of ways, they were set up on that day not to do their job properly.

Interjection.

Mr. Jonah Schein: That's right.

But my real concern is with the people who were absolutely abused on that day, people who were kettled for four hours at a time, five hours at a time in the freezing rain; people who lived in this city—for days. These were people who lived in this city, who were asked, who were questioned on what they were doing in their own neighbourhood, why they were walking down the street, why they were buying groceries. People were detained for days at a time, without access to a telephone; people were strip-searched—just gross violations of people's civil liberties over that weekend. And we have not yet heard a clear apology from this government and we have really not moved this forward to make sure this never happens again. I think it's good that we're talking about it now, but without a real apology it's a bit hollow.

0930

And it goes far—in ridings across this province. I know somebody; I don't know if she's a constituent, but in Parkdale–High Park this woman was pulled over by police and searched for no reason at all. She was an artist who used spray paint as her medium, so she had a mask in her bag when she was detained. She was held for 48 hours for doing her principal job as an artist. What is the reason that we give that we should host the G20 in Toronto when we can't even protect people's civil liberties here at home? It's absolutely obscene.

I think overall, we need to restore people's hope that government matters, that we can be a democratic society. We can't off-load everything; we need to take responsibility. We can't give the job of setting the budget to a banker. It's hard to argue with people who are concerned that banks are running—

Interjection: Finance minister Drummond.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Yeah. It's hard to argue that government matters when we won't even do our job; when we hire a banker to do the job of the finance minister. It's hard when we have the two biggest parties here competing on who will cut taxes faster, who will get rid of government faster.

Interjection: You're backtracking a little bit.

Interjection: Yeah, Jonah, stay on message.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm on message.

We need to make sure that people know that we are ready to step up and that, consistently, the NDP will stand up and say, "We're ready to govern." We believe in public policy. We know that we can protect civil liberties in this province. We know that we can provide education to our province. We know that we can help people when they're in trouble. We know that we can create jobs when we work together. We're going to take responsibility for planning in this province. We're not going to offload our jobs. We're not going to make secret deals about how policing happens. We're not going to hire in bankers to set public policy.

We actually believe that this place should create good public policy that should serve Ontarians, and never was that more clear that that was missing than over that weekend. I know that constituents in my riding and across the

city are still waiting for an apology and would like to get to the bottom of this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It was interesting, to say the least, to listen to the comments from my colleague from Davenport.

There was an interesting line when Benjamin Disraeli was the Prime Minister of Great Britain. He was in question period one day and was being asked a question from the opposition. The Disraeli government had changed a position after getting some new information with regards to public policy in Great Britain, and Prime Minister Disraeli's response to the Leader of the Opposition was, that day, "Sir, what would you do if you received new information about your particular position?" So things happen from time to time when positions change.

If you look at this issue, there's no question: The Public Works Protection Act was brought in in 1939, and the companion act, the War Measures Act, was brought in at the same time, dealing with a set of particular circumstances back in 1939, the advent of the Second World War.

But it's interesting: I remember when I was a municipal councillor and, from time to time, you would get briefings from the local police service as they would quantify risk factors of particular things that might be happening in a community at any particular time; guns and gangs and other influences that might impact policing in one's community. There's no question that the G20 summit held here in Toronto—most of us recognize that that would amount to a significant security risk, having the leaders of the largest economies come right here.

But I want to move on—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Are you defending what you did, Jeff?

Mr. Jeff Leal: My friend Mr. Yakabuski is trying to throw me off this morning but I won't let that happen—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We know that we don't use names; we use ridings. Thank you.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I did not honour the rules.

It's time that this act, a new act, was brought in to cover these circumstances.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I must say to the member for Peterborough, the chief government whip: I would have thought that he might have taken this opportunity to stand up and apologize, not try to defend what they did with respect to passing this regulation 233/10 in June of 2010. I heard the member for Davenport speak. We know today, Speaker—and I've already spoken to this for an hour, so I won't get another chance—that the Liberals, the government, the ones that passed this G20 regulation and the ones that have had to bring this legislation to try to get away from it, don't want to speak to this bill anymore. It's their bill; they don't want to speak to it—a few two-minute hits. I would expect that every one of the 54—52, I guess it is, because of the Speaker—members over there would want to take the opportunity during this debate to stand up to the members of this Legislature and to the people of Ontario and say, "If we have nothing else to say, we at least have one thing to say, and that is, 'We're sorry. We're sorry for the abdication of our legal responsibility to govern, and we're sorry for passing a regulation behind closed doors, hiding it from the Legislature and thereby hiding it from the people.'" I just say that you've got an opportunity here. Having said that, an apology doesn't suffice. When you've done something wrong, there are two things that have to happen: You have to have contrition; and there is a price to pay. Just because the criminals say they're sorry doesn't mean they don't go to jail. This government has failed on two accounts, and it must be held to account. On this side of the House, we will do our job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Speaker. First of all, I want to applaud the member from Davenport, who spoke with passion and compassion about what happened those fateful days.

I'd like to quote the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, who tweeted on that day, "What happened was wrong and I believe violated our charter rights." We agree with him. We believe what happened was wrong and did violate our charter rights. I wish he had had the ear of his cabinet. Clearly, not even he knew what was going on behind closed doors. Unfortunately, he had a bit of a change of tune, because later he described or inferred that everybody who was demonstrating on those days were terrorists. I mean, please; I was one of them. I was one of them, standing with Tibetans. Were the Tibetans terrorists? I was one of them, standing with church leaders and people of faiths of all kinds on a Sunday to do a service. Were they terrorists? I was standing with unionists, who covered the grounds of Queen's Park. Were they terrorists? Those were the ones hurt by the invocation of a secret regulation, done in secret when the Legislature was in session—not even known by Liberal backbenchers. That was only outdone, I might say, in the history of this country by a Liberal Prime Minister who at one point invoked the War Measures Act and suspended civil liberties from coast to coast. That outdid this particular action, but this particular action was right up there. Not only does it demand an apology; it demands an inquiry. We have long called for such: a public inquiry that would hold the cabinet ministers who made that decision to account. That's what is needed so that we can actually get them on the stand and ask them to account for their actions and tell us what really went on, because we still don't know. That's not democracy; that's an oligarchy at work. And that was this government at work in an oligarchy. The people of Ontario deserve better. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments? The Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker. Of course, you know, when you're in opposition you try to create as much chaos as possible. I've been over there. I know the routine. You get together first thing in the morning, and somebody is going to come up with the ultimate question that will bring the government to its knees.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I realize that. Everything here is put on a totally partisan basis. Look, the regulation was passed, but you also know from the various reports that were done that the regulation was used only in a very limited sense. What you're trying to do is take everything else that happened on that weekend—many things that shouldn't have happened; I totally agree—and blame it all on this limited resolution that, to my understanding from the various reports that I have read, was only used on one or two isolated occasions of everything else that happened.

0940

Speaker, you know what I would really hope for—and I come from a municipal background, as do the member from Ancaster and the member from Peterborough. I can honestly tell you, having been here for 17 years—

Interjections.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Just hear me out for a moment—that there are more intelligent debates at most municipal council meetings around this province on an ongoing basis—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm looking at standing order 23(h), (i), (j) and (k), "Makes allegations against another member.... Imputes false or unavowed motives to another member." I think that's what the Attorney General just did to the entire opposition.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Frankly, I did not hear anything of that nature from the Attorney General. I rule that that's not a point of order. Thank you.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you, Speaker. I would never impute a motive on any member in this House—never have, never will.

As I said earlier, I've heard more meaningful debates at council meetings than in this place here, because everybody looks at their speaking notes and blah, blah, blah. The debate here sometimes is pretty awful, and I think we can all agree on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Davenport has a two-minute reply.

Mr. Jonah Schein: In response to the member opposite, I'm new here, and I respect your years of service here. I'd love to sit down and have a coffee and hear about how we could make debate better here. I would like to hear from you how we can make this a place where we actually serve the needs of folks in Ontario, where we—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Leave all talking points out of here—

Mr. Jonah Schein: Friend, do I look like I'm using—

Interjections.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Speaker, to the member opposite: In fairness, I wasn't using any talking points this morning. I was speaking from my heart, as somebody who was there, somebody who actually has a real concern about the way this province is governed, about the kind of growing inequality that we see in this province, about the environmental disaster that comes every day because we don't have proper government regulations—

Interjection: No leadership.

Mr. Jonah Schein: We don't have leadership. So I speak from my heart as a new person here and as somebody who was on the streets those days. It might seem like a little thing, or you might say that it was only used in a small way, that secret law, but in fact the chill that it puts through a city and a province when people don't know what rights they have, they don't know if they are eligible to be searched when they're going to buy groceries, they don't know how close they have to be to a fence before they have to show identification—this puts a chill through a city, through a province, and it fundamentally undermines the democratic process, when people don't know what their rights are and when we have deals secretly negotiated. So I hope that you won't minimize that concern. Even though it was not used on a mass scale, the implications were massive.

Hon. John Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I respect the member from Davenport, as I respect every member in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm not sure that was a point of order, but it was a statement. I can't count that as a point of order; I'm sorry.

Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I understand that you don't consider that a point of order. Is there any way that we might consider it an apology?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That is not a point of order either.

Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to be here today to debate Bill 34. I'm also pleased to join the debate and congratulate my colleagues. From time to time in this chamber, we have disagreements. We all, in this chamber, have our own views that have been shaped by our own histories and by our communities that we represent, that we've grown up in. I think that speaks to the heart of this legislation, doesn't it? It speaks to the legitimacy and the credibility of this parliamentary process that we've engaged in, and the lack of one last year.

I've heard many people speak on this bill, and some people, I agreed with; others, I didn't. Elements of some people's speeches, I agreed with; elements of that same speech, I didn't. But the reality is, that is why we have debate in this chamber. It is the rules that protect the minority from the tyranny of the majority. And it is in this House where we are expected to have that debate. It's not every day we're going to have that great debate on philosophies and how this place should be run, but when it talks about the need to police our streets in an international come-together of nations in one of our major cities not only in this province but in Canada—it's important that that be brought to this chamber.

I was here last year. We asked some questions in the Legislature about this particular issue. I was one of the members who asked the Minister of Health Promotion at the time why she would allow this secret law to be rubber-stamped at cabinet. It was the Minister of Health Promotion at the time, because there were a number of members of cabinet who sat on that secret committee that rubber-stamped that.

At the time, we were told we had to speak to the Attorney General and ask him the questions, because it dealt directly with his portfolio. But at the time, us in the opposition, and me as one of the folks who actually asked the question, wondered why it went through a regulatory change at cabinet and not as law in front of this chamber. Because at the end of the day, we may have agreed with the Liberals; maybe we would have agreed with the NDP. But the point is, we deserved and we had the right to debate in this chamber, because that is why we are sent to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's called democracy.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is called democracy, as my colleague from Northumberland–Quinte West just pointed out. It is about bringing an idea to this chamber, to represent the people who sent us here to talk about the big issues of the day. None were bigger at that moment in time, in 2010, when people were being charged and arrested, and fear was in the eyes of a lot of people in our country because we saw horrific images on our television sets. I remember sitting in Nepean one day—it was a Saturday—watching the channel with my husband to see what the spectacle was here in Toronto that day.

In the opposition, we're not the only ones to have had serious concerns over how that secret G20 law—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Sneaky.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —sneaky G20 law came into being. We know, for example, there is historical context to why this act was put in place. I remember at the time, and colleagues who were here then will tell you, that the Liberals tried to blame a Conservative Prime Minister and a Premier from the 1930s for this legislation. Get with the times. You've been in power for three elections now. When are they going to take responsibility? They never want to take responsibility.

Those who were here last week heard probably one of the most remarkable speeches they're going to hear in the 40th Parliament—and the Attorney General today spoke about people not using talking points when they speak in this chamber. My colleague Mr. Yakabuski from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, our critic for community safety and correctional services, spoke with great passion about the historical relevance of this bill, how we arrived at that point, and why this party, this Liberal Party, should take responsibility. He told us, for example, about the historical context of the War Measures Act. He actually spoke at great length about his father's service to this—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Excuse me. Could the members in the gallery please take their seats? Thank you.

Sorry. Go ahead.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: He spoke at great length about his own father's service, and I was really touched by that, because for all members who are here today, not only was his father a member of this assembly for a great many years, but before that, he actually served in the Second World War. He talked about the historical context of the threat to civilization in the 1940s. It was also at that time that I learned a little bit more about my colleague. I think that's what we are sent here to do: to learn a little bit more about each other's point of view and respect that, not sneak legislation through the back door.

0950

You'll recall: This wasn't the only piece of legislation that they snuck through at the time. They also snuck through the eco fees during that same period. It became very clear that this was a government that got lazy, arrogant and entitled and decided to do things their way, not our way.

My colleague talked about Canada declaring a war in September 1939, about three days after it was declared by Great Britain. The federal Parliament of Canada at the time invoked the War Measures Act, and we brought it in through the Public Works Protection Act just after that.

That brings us to 2010, when we saw those horrific images on our television sets during the G20. Then, fast forward, of course, to our Ontario Ombudsman, who produced a report called Caught in the Act. He says on page 9, point 9, "The only way to understand why the Legislature of Ontario would create a statute conferring police powers of this kind is to hearken to history. The Public Works Protection Act is a war measure."

Interjection: War measure.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: War measure. "It was enacted in 1939 during an emergency session of the Legislature in the days following the declaration of war against Germany to deal with the threat posed by saboteurs against Ontario's infrastructure. Guards and peace officers were given the kind of authority one might expect in a time of war or emergency circumstance—the kind of authority that stretches, if not transgresses, constitutional rights."

The Ombudsman, then, further says, "Yet here, in 2010, was the province of Ontario conferring wartime" measures and "powers on police officers in peacetime. That is a decision that should not have been taken lightly,

particularly not in the era of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

Like my colleague from Oshawa, there is a policing background in my family. For years, my father was the chairman of the police commission in the small town of New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. He was also the president of the Canadian Association of Police Boards. He had a service of 26 men. He, of course, got to work with people like Norm Gardner and, at the time, Julian Fantino from Toronto during that period where they had thousands of officers, and they learned to respect and work with one another. I have the greatest respect for our police officers in the city of Ottawa and elsewhere across this province and our nation, but the reality is, at that period in time in 2010, they were equipped with powers that likened those that were to threaten Ontario's infrastructure during a time of war.

Interjections: War.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: War, Mr. Speaker. And this government decided at that time to ignore this Legislature so we could not have public debate.

Then, as our friend the Ombudsman, a friend of this Legislature, an officer of this Legislature, said, they were caught in the act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a pleasure to listen to the member from Nepean–Carleton and her 10 minutes of description of what actually went on.

I noted many catcalls at the beginning of her statements, but I didn't find anything that she said untoward. What she was talking about is that the government chose to enact legislation akin to the War Measures Act against the citizens of Ontario. She quoted extensively from the Ombudsman, Mr. Marin, and what he had to say about this.

Again, we keep coming back and back to this. The government of the day, the cabinet of the day and the hangers-on around that table knew precisely what they were doing. They have many government tools. They have many tools at their disposal, but they chose to take an act which was intended to protect Canadian interests, particularly property interests, in a time of war. They used that in a time of peace. They used it against people who were not insurgents who were coming to the country to attack our infrastructure, but against people who were out there exercising their legitimate right of self-expression and for people who wanted to simply state that they felt that the world economies and the things that were happening in their lives were not to their liking.

I commend the member for bringing this up. I am still waiting, as she is, for an apology from those who sat around that table. Surely, with the force of hindsight, looking back, I don't know how anyone around that table could have thought we were in a time of war. I don't know why anyone sitting around that table would have thought that this was an appropriate action. Please, somebody over there, stand up and do the right thing and apologize to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today, and certainly I'm listening to the other speakers as they bring forward their opinions on this. Some of the things I've heard, I think I'd agree with. Some of them are factual and some of them I think are stretched a little bit, and that's not unusual around this place, I don't think.

But certainly I think we can all agree that the G20 was held in Toronto and the G8 was held in Huntsville—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, member from Nepean.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Further to the member from Oakville's statement, he may want to correct the record. He did impugn motive toward me in suggesting that what I was saying was not factual when I was quoting from the Ombudsman's report.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'll rule on that right away. I don't feel that he did that. I think he was skirting around the issue, but he did not exactly make a comment to you directly. So I'm going to rule that that's not a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. Certainly I think people are a little more sensitive to what they've been saying than others around this place, and from time to time, we will disagree.

The city of Toronto was given four months to come up with a plan for the hosting of the G20. Huntsville was given two years. Obviously there were a number of goings-on that have been discovered since the G8 was held in Huntsville. Questions continue to be asked about what went on up there. I think down here what has happened is that a piece of legislation that's been around since the 1930s was enacted. In hindsight, it was found to be lacking.

We've put forward suggestions as to how that can be changed, as to how that can be improved. The federal government has clearly said that they're trying to, I think, avoid responsibility for this. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association has said that the federal government is clearly responsible for the G20. It's time to move on. Everybody is using this, I think, as a bit of a scapegoat.

I think what we've got is a way of moving on, and it's time to move on. This bill is worthy of the support of all members of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened quite carefully and attentively—and quietly, I might say—to the member from Nepean–Carleton. I thought she was quite fair in her assessment. It really reflected what I think I heard the Ombudsman say in December; I believe it was in 2010. It was a scathing indictment on the McGuinty government. That's clear.

Frankly, what we're asking here today—they won't stand to defend their own piece of legislation. The report, of course, was Caught in the Act. That couldn't be any

more deliberate an accusation of the government. Impugning motive: There's the motive by the Ombudsman. Not only that; the only other person that invoked the War Measures Act was Trudeau. They use a hammer when you need a fly swatter.

Now, the issue here is really this: We were never apprised of this in this Legislature, which would have been a fair and reasonable thing to do, and yet they want to blame Stephen Harper for this. It would be my understanding that the G20 was held in Toronto, the largest, most-respected city in Canada probably. So I think there was a lack of leadership on that side, a lack of transparency and a lack of respect, basically, for the people in the Toronto area.

1000

Not only that; Roy McMurtry, the former Chief Justice of Ontario, also commissioned a report. This report by an independent, well-respected former Conservative Attorney General for Ontario basically redrafted the 1939 legislation. Why didn't they do that before they had the secret cabinet meeting, and get it right? I have lost trust in this government's processes to lead the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member from Nepean–Carleton. She always speaks with passion, and she spoke with passion about this. It's hard not to speak with passion. This was a blight upon Ontario and our reputation around the world; it was a blight on Toronto. I was part of those demonstrations; I'm neither a terrorist nor a murderer, nor were the other thousands that took place peacefully in downtown Toronto and were met with what could only be construed as police violence. This government was behind that.

This government met in secret, invoked a secret regulation that nobody knew about, not even their own backbenchers, while this Legislature was in session. No wonder they were slammed by J.J. McMurtry; no wonder they were slammed by the Ombudsman. They would be slammed by anybody concerned in the least with civil liberties in this province and in the city of Toronto. And yet, what horrifies us in the opposition and what horrifies not only us but anybody concerned with civil liberties across Ontario is the lack of the public inquiry that could call those cabinet ministers and the Premier to account and, quite frankly, what we're all saying here today: the absolute lack of an apology.

This government is a government in denial. You can look at them now: All their heads are down. They're guilty. They should be guilty, guilty as charged, and they should apologize.

It was mentioned once that when you're guilty and you've been proven so by not only an Ombudsman but by a special report by a former Attorney General, you do two things: You say you're sorry and you act that apology out. This, they think, is their apology. This bill is by way of an apology. I look forward to speaking about this bill and its pluses and its shortfalls in a few minutes. But for now, it would be enough just to hear, "I'm sorry."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nepean–Carleton has two minutes.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd really like to congratulate my friends for entering into debate today because that is why we're here: my colleagues from Durham, Parkdale–High Park, Beaches–East York and, of course, Oakville; although I do believe the member from Oakville, had a bit of heifer dust in his speech today. I'd just point that out. I see my friends here from the Ottawa firefighters. I appreciate you being here today.

Look, at the end of the day, the Ombudsman said that this group here was caught in the act. I have the report here. Let me read a section from page 11, section 15. This should clear up everything.

"More importantly, it was grossly unreasonable and unfair for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services to let regulation 233/10 fly under the radar"—as it did. "No one knew about the regulation until after the news of Mr. Vasey's arrest under the act went viral. Not the public, not the press, not the administrators of the very city in which it was to be implemented. As our investigation revealed, quite remarkably, not even the Integrated Security Unit Steering Committee lead or key members of the Integrated Security Unit's G20 Public Affairs Communications Team knew of the regulation."

They shut out members of this assembly, who are sent here to debate important issues of the day. They did it under the radar, as the Ombudsman said. He finishes with this: "And the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services did nothing to ensure that people would be aware of these powers so that they could govern themselves accordingly."

We stand here today demanding an apology.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Nothing, Speaker. They did nothing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order. Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour and privilege, always, to be able to stand in this place on behalf of the people of Ontario and the incredible people in Parkdale–High Park.

To talk about the incredible people of Parkdale–High Park for a moment, I'll tell you what happened on the Sunday in my life and in the life of Parkdale–High Park that was during the G20. I'm a United Church minister by trade, as many know, and I went down to the G20. I called for all faith leaders to go down and have a prayer service. People from all denominations went; we gathered and we went down to King Street because of the disruption brought upon us by this government—I'll talk about that in a minute. We went down to King Street to hold a prayer service Sunday morning.

We gathered and we held that prayer service, only to be met with a riot squad—again, we're faith leaders here

of all denominations—a riot squad, a line of people who looked like Darth Vader moving towards us, clearing us away from King Street. This is our street. These were our streets. Remember that chant? "Whose streets? Our streets." Well, King Street was our street, nowhere near the meetings of the leaders but close enough that we were cleared off our own street. In fact, one of the faith leader's church was very close to there; she was cleared away from that as well.

Not wanting to invoke trouble—none of us—I left. I came back to my riding in Parkdale–High Park, only to find, right outside my home on Queen Street, the entire street closed down. Now, I can tell you that Queen Street, Queen and Dufferin, is nowhere close to where the G20 leaders were meeting and discussing. There was no reason to close down Queen Street, and nobody would tell us why, by the way. Shut down completely.

My neighbours, some of them lawyers, came out and asked the police for badge numbers. They were not forthcoming. They asked the police where they were from and on whose orders they were there; that information was not forthcoming. People, of course, were tweeting all over the place. We expected that the police would invoke violence, because all of a sudden we expected hundreds of people to come to Queen and Dufferin from downtown once they heard what was going on there. I went over and spoke to the police person in charge and said, "You know, you're just inciting violence here by your presence. You're not helping the matter."

I was standing, Mr. Speaker, next to an Iraqi war vet who had come up here from the United States. He said he had never seen policing like that. He was trained in the marines.

He said, "Who's in charge here?"

I said, "Good question. Who's in charge here?" because it was apparent nobody was.

Finally, they packed up. Finally, they left. One of my favourite chants from that day was—because we're very good friends with our police people in my riding, the 11th and 14th. Shout-outs and kudos to them; they do a great job. One of the chants that I liked best was: "Whose police? Our police. Who are you? We want our police." That was part of the problem. These were police from who knows where, brought into a situation that they had no control over and then didn't know what they were doing in, clearly. So there are problems there.

But the question is: Where did the problems start? Who unleashed this nightmare on the city of Toronto?

Hon. John Milloy: Stephen Harper.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I hear a jibe from across the way that it was Stephen Harper. Do you know what? There is enough blame to go around here. I'm absolutely ready to say there—a pox on both their houses, Mr. Speaker. There was some blame to go around. Ottawa, no doubt, is to blame, in part.

But it wasn't Ottawa that sat around a cabinet table here at Queen's Park while this Legislature was in session. It wasn't Stephen Harper; it was, in fact, the Premier of this province who sat around that cabinet table and decided to invoke a little-known regulation meant to be used in wartime in this situation, that both confused and befuddled not only the people of Ontario but the police themselves. It was this government that did that. This government did that and got slammed by the Ombudsman and got slammed by Justice McMurtry for doing so. That's what happened here.

Now we have Bill 34 that has been brought in that undoes that regulation. But I want to talk about something it also does, which is of a little concern to us in the New Democratic Party and should be of concern to civil libertarians. It also says that, going forward, even though they're going to get rid of that regulation, it requires any person entering or inside a courthouse to produce identification and provide information to assess their security risk. It also talks about this at nuclear facilities.

I don't really get the juxtaposition, Mr. Speaker. There were no nuclear facilities in downtown Toronto on that weekend, and, to my knowledge, courthouses were not under threat. The main demonstrations were downtown and around Queen's Park and around downtown where the G20 was meeting. So why put together these two items? We are very concerned about civil liberties for those who are entering and leaving courthouses. Why aren't courthouses open to the public? Why shouldn't they be? These are public facilities. We're going to be looking for amendments, and I just put that out there because clearly that's a problem.

1010

Again, you see the hand of the government here, trying to work almost in secret: "We'll pass a bill that, yes, we want to get rid of that regulation—but no, we don't"—a little bit of a poison pill there. We're going to be looking at that in the New Democratic Party because, again, we don't want to correct one mistake only to make another.

On the Saturday of that weekend, I was out here demonstrating with Tibetans. There were thousands of Tibetans who were demonstrating about the occupation of their homeland, those same Tibetans who are now immolating themselves—about 23 monks and nuns who have died in Tibet because of the occupation there. Those Tibetans had not seen policing like that, some of them, since they left Tibet and saw the Chinese army at work.

Can you imagine how the police presence felt to all of those immigrants and new Canadians who were demonstrating here, who came to this country, who arrived in Ontario, just exactly because they wanted a country that didn't use police forces like that? They wanted a country, a province and a city that exercised democracy. Yet they came here only to see people being shoved by people in riot gear, cleared from areas they had no business being cleared away from.

I was here on the Saturday with the Tibetans demonstrating—"those terrorists" and "those murderers," in the words of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, who, by the way, had a little change of heart, because on that weekend he was tweeting about the fundamental rights of the citizens in his riding being abridged

and insulted; then all of a sudden, I guess he got the Liberal Party line, and all of a sudden he's talking about murderers and terrorists, and the reaction was to deal with them.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not a murderer; I'm not a terrorist. I was there every single day. I was there for a good reason. I was there, like the vast majority, the 98.9% of the people who were there, to demonstrate peacefully, to let the world know about issues we felt were important. That's why I was there.

What happened was unconscionable. It was, as many have said, a blot upon our history in this province, in our city. Movies have been made about it. People in other countries are talking about it still. The Ombudsman did a report; the Attorney General did a report slamming the government for this. And yet, silence, silence across the aisle—silence. Heads down, guilty expressions, nobody saying nothing: "We weren't there; we didn't see anything; we didn't hear anything."

This is exactly the sort of situation that we in this parliamentary tradition are trained, brought here and enabled to prevent. I mean, we were elected just to prevent such an occurrence as occurred that weekend, when a government can act single-handedly while a Legislature is in session, undemocratically, without consulting even their own members, to bring in a little-known regulation that can be used to take away, virtually, the civil liberties of its citizens. We were elected—people fought and died to get us elected—to be able to stand up for freedom of speech, civil liberties, freedom of association, all of those good things, all of which were abridged, all of which were insulted on that weekend.

Now, the government wants to have us forget, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, we will never forget. People in Parkdale–High Park will never forget. I hear from people from all political persuasions in my riding, saying, "Whatever happened out of that? Who was ever held to account for that? Who paid the price for that? Who had to resign over that one?" The answer I have to give them is: not one person; no apology, no resignation, no answer. Silence, heads down, heads looking away—the kind of silence that the guilty always invoke. I mean, come on. Come on.

This was horrendous. This was chaos. To quote the Attorney General—he wants chaos? That weekend was chaos: hundreds of arrests without cause, hundreds of citizens stopped without reason. That was chaos. He wants chaos? It's chaos when a government can get away with it without one person apologizing, without one person resigning, with silence across the hall. That's chaos. That's chaos waiting to happen.

This regulation or not, Mr. Speaker—even if they take it off the books and this bill is passed? They are still guilty and they still have not said so. We still have not got an apology. Say you're sorry. Say it now.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would like to welcome today members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, who will be visiting members of the Legislature in their offices and also having a reception this evening as part of their annual Queen's Park day. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? This is going to take some time, so let's be patient.

The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. I would also like to welcome the firefighters this morning, and one of our representatives from Hamilton Mountain, or from Hamilton as a whole, Mr. Ron Summers. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not yet the Attorney General. It's coming, but I'm not.

I would like to welcome all the members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association who are here today as part of their legislative conference. We have Fred LeBlanc and Barry Quinn from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, and John Sobey and Erik Leicht from the Ottawa Professional Fire Fighters Association. And finally, I would like to acknowledge all the firefighters who are here from across the province this week for meetings with the MPPs.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I want to welcome to Queen's Park today—and they'll be joining us in the gallery—two grade 5 classes from St. Martin Catholic Elementary School in Smithville, Ontario. Teachers Frank Wilson and Leanne Szabo are bringing their students here, and I want to welcome them from my home riding here to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome them.

Member from Welland?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to introduce four individual firefighters who are here today—Mike Fowler, from Welland; Ryan Madill, Mike Vail and Chris Wheeler, from St. Catharines—and, of course, all the other firefighters who are here with us today. Thanks for being here.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm here to welcome a number of Queen's University students on their annual trip to Queen's Park, organized by one of our favourite columnists, Christina Blizzard, and they're all in the media gallery there. I'll just name them all: Stephanie Beakbane, Dan Bodirsky, Lorenzo Colocado, Rebecca Cuthbert, Summer Danakas, Daniella Davila-Aquije, Alia Elmsary, Sandrine Emmanuel, Janina Enrile, Andrew Green, Moraa Mochama, Marina Makris, Jacqueline Palef, Olivia Robinson, Diego Santesteban, Brittany Shales, Allison St. John and Kelly Whiting. I'm sure they'll have a great day, meeting—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. I'd like to mention a guest I have here. There are a number of people from Prince Edward county, but one specifically whom I wanted to mention, a former member of federal Parliament in 1979, representing Scarborough West, and he currently lives in my riding of Prince Edward–Hastings: Mr. Bill Wightman.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I, too, want to recognize the firefighters and, in particular, two from my riding of Niagara Falls. Todd Brunning has been a firefighter for 10 years and has been the association president for two years and an executive board member for over five years.

The other individual I want to recognize is David Jarrett, who has been a firefighter for 15 years and holds the rank of acting captain. The captain has been the secretary for three years and a great community leader in Niagara Falls.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I've got a number of people to introduce, first of all from the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association: Michael Gagnon from the Midland firefighters association, and Glenn Higgins and Randy Oldfield from the Orillia firefighters association.

Also from Ducks Unlimited—it's their lobby day and they have a reception here this afternoon as well down in room 228. There is Julie Cayley, Michelle Stuckless, Joanne Barbazza, Owen Steele, Erling Armson, Kevin Rich and Christie-Lee Hazzard. I know there's a number of others. I want to welcome them all to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Jeff Leal: He's to arrive shortly: Mr. Robert Lloyd, who is president of the Peterborough Professional Firefighters Association.

Mr. John O'Toole: I have two different introductions. The Ontario Professional Firefighters from my riding of Durham: Dan Worrall from Clarington and Dan Bonnar from Ajax.

Also I'd like to recognize students from the Canadian Federation of Students whom I'll be meeting with today: Chantle Beeso, Clara Ho and Asad Jamal. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. I have got a few introductions; I really appreciate it. The family of page Michael Davidson is at Queen's Park. Michael is from the great riding of Ottawa Centre. We've got his dad, Paul Davidson, who lives in Ottawa Centre, here today; Aunt Ann Davidson; and grandparents Ross and Doris Davidson, who live in the riding of Don Valley West. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from—

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I have two more quick introductions, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Make them very quick. I'm trying to be patient here with everybody.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Very quick: Two of Ottawa's finest firefighters, John Sobey and Erik Leicht, are in Queen's Park. Welcome.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I would like to introduce, from the Waterloo firefighters, Brett Gibson and Dean Good. Welcome both of you.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Jim Holmes, Phil King and Fred LeBlanc: London firefighters and great representatives of the profession.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'd like to introduce firefighters from Cambridge visiting Queen's Park: John Jetter and Ken Talbot.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I have a couple of introductions as well. I want to welcome the professional firefighters from Thunder Bay. Eric Nordlund and Phillip Dzuba are here today, and I think maybe others as well.

I also want to welcome Ducks Unlimited. They do tremendous work in the province in terms of restoring and reclaiming our wetlands. There's a reception, as my colleague pointed out, this afternoon in rooms 228 and 230, from 5 to 7 p.m.—tremendous work. We welcome them very much today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As you could all see, I tried my best to get as many in as possible. We were over the time, and I'll try to ask for your patience in getting to this as quickly as possible. A friend of mine from Brant, Ed Glover from the professional firefighters, is in the Speaker's gallery.

I would also advise you that there might be moments where you can slip in some of the introductions that won't be a point of order and that I will accept.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is directed to the Premier. Premier, we have two major crises in the province of Ontario. We have a spending crisis—we're heading towards a $30-billion deficit; and a jobs crisis—we have 600,000 women and men unemployed. The problem is that you've backed away from most of the recommendations of your own senior economist, Mr. Drummond, and you've added about another $4 billion or $5 billion into the hole. As a result you've had to make taxes higher than they otherwise would be to pay for all your spending. This is going to hurt job creation even more.

But Premier, my question today is, the real key—one of the other keys to creating jobs in Ontario and opening us up for investment is reliable and affordable energy. Today I'm introducing a private member's bill to take us down that path away from your expensive subsidies. Will you support that initiative—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to engage in this particular discussion. I think it's always helpful to Ontarians when they know where their leaders stand on the issues. It's not always easy to

tell when it comes to my honourable colleague, the leader of the official opposition. They were against subways; now they say they're for them. They were against full-day kindergarten; then they said they are for it; and now they're against it; They were for the HST; then they were against it, and now they're for it.

But I will give them full marks for consistency when it comes to clean, green energy: They have been unwavering in their opposition to clean energy in the province of Ontario.

I want Ontarians to understand that we favour clean green energy, the jobs that come with that and the clean air that benefits our children—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, here's the problem, Premier: You've taken us down a path of very expensive energy rates. One of the historic strengths of the province of Ontario: For 100 years we had lower energy rates than the average of the US states. We were among the most competitive bordering states and provinces. Now, under your expensive feed-in tariff program, we are, as of 2009, above the American average and heading to having the second most expensive energy in all of North America.

I want to see us creating jobs. A key component of that is reliable and affordable energy. Premier, will you take us off the path of your expensive feed-in tariff program? Because quite frankly, it's costing us even more jobs in the province of Ontario.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, my honourable colleague confirms once again that he stands foursquare against clean, green energy in the province of Ontario and the jobs and clean air that come with that.

My colleague made reference to the American circumstance. Two days ago, coincidentally, I had a meeting with Governor Pat Quinn, the governor of Illinois. We engaged in a very fruitful discussion, and most of our conversation was devoted to Ontario's feed-in tariff program and what it is that they might do in the state of Illinois to adopt this kind of a program down there. He wants the jobs there that we're creating here. He wants the clean air there that we're enjoying here. He wants the bright future there that we're building here in the province of Ontario by committing ourselves to an exciting new sector. It's clean, green energy and it speaks to the promise of the future—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the problem is that your feed-in tariff program fails basic economic sense. In fact, the Auditor General ripped the lid off of your program and exposed the expensive track that you have us on in his rather scathing report in December 2011. In short, the Auditor General said that we have subsidized exports of power to New York and Quebec because your contracts force us to take power even when we don't need it. Tom Adams says that we're heading towards having the second-highest energy rates not only in Canada but in North America.

I want to see businesses creating jobs in Ontario. I want to see us open for investment again, and a key part of that, Premier, is reliable, affordable energy. Why don't you free up Ontario's job creators and get us back on the historic track of reliable, affordable energy to power our economy and help us create jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I know that my honourable colleague is going to want to recognize that, after California, we are the world's favourite destination in North America for foreign investment. First is California; then there's Ontario.

We have drawn billions and billions of dollars in new investment in our green energy plan here in the province of Ontario.

Interjection: Where?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague says, "Where?" Speaker, there is a manufacturing facility they're building in Tillsonburg with 400 jobs; another in Windsor with 700 jobs; another in Don Mills with 200 jobs. Farmers, in particular, are the most adamant proponents of our feed-in tariff program—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —and we see them participating in the program—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will be—

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —Renfrew county, Perth county, Haldimand county and so many other parts of rural Ontario. Our single strongest group of supporters and champions for feed-in tariff in Ontario, Speaker, is Ontario farmers.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, Speaker, it's disturbing to see the Premier looking with envy on California, which is running into bankruptcy. If this is your model for Ontario, it's frightening indeed.

The Premier's ignorance of the reaction of small-town and rural Ontario from the last election is frightening as well. He has almost a cult-like zeal for this program that has moved away from any kind of connection to economic reality. Your own Auditor General said that for every subsidized job you create, Premier, you lose two to four jobs in the broader economy: in manufacturing, in resources and in the commercial sector.

Premier, instead of trying to continue to drive off the cliff, let's reverse course. Let's get back on track: reliable, affordable energy to strengthen our economy. We want to create jobs in the province of Ontario. I don't want us to see us become another California. I want to see a strong, proud, prosperous province of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, to the Minister of Energy.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order. The less I have to stand, the better.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you very much, Speaker. Ontario families, Ontario businesses have been doing a lot of work in the last eight years rebuilding the transmission system, bringing on new generation and cleaning up the air from the mess that was left by the party opposite.

Families and businesses expect power when they flip the switch. They expect the air to be clean; they expect their homes and businesses to be able to work and to function. The reality is, the other party burned coal, the other party invested in dirty air, and the other party had generators on street corners. We've taken a reliable, clean approach to energy in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Leader, supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I kind of want to pursue the Premier's response a moment ago that he wants to turn Ontario into another California. I think that's a very dangerous economic course to take us on when the state is catapulting towards bankruptcy.

Premier, not too long ago when you were the energy critic, you said the following: "I submit I am not going out on much of a limb when I say there is a direct correlation between Hydro's rates and our rate of unemployment in Ontario." Premier, you said, "As the rates go up, so will the rate of unemployment." That was Dalton McGuinty in 1991.

We'd actually agree with that statement. We think that it's actually grounded in sensible economics. The problem is, Premier, you've become detached from basic economics here. Rates are heading up under your policies to among the highest in all of North America. We have a jobs crisis in Ontario. We want to see businesses powered up and hiring again.

Will you take us off this reckless course of turning Ontario into—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Energy?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: You know, Speaker, the job numbers are coming up from our clean and green energy investments—jobs that rely on reliable power.

The previous party did not have reliable power. We had to import it at high cost, but they hid the cost on the taxpayer. They froze the cost and put it on the taxpayer and then they freed up the market and put it on the taxpayer, and that's why we're all paying a debt retirement charge right now—still paying.

We've invested in clean air instead of hiding the $4 billion on the health payroll. We've invested in clean energy jobs, which affects every part of this province. I think the people of Ontario want to breathe clean air, have good jobs and have the clean energy jobs that go with those investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, I'd just like to ask the Premier more about his plans to turn Ontario into another California. Premier, your jobs plan is obviously badly broken. We have the combined populations of Brampton and Burlington out of work today in Ontario: some 600,000 unemployed.

Now, before you said we should be like California, you used to say we should model ourselves after France and Germany and Spain and Italy when it came to the feed-in-tariff program, which they started about—what?—10 years ago.

Premier, they're now moving away from that. In fact, they're ending the subsidies in those countries and dramatically moving away. It's an experiment that has failed everywhere else it has been tried. You seem to be wanting to double down.

I'll ask again: In the sense of economic reason, don't take us down California's path; get back to basics here in Ontario—reliable, affordable energy so we can create jobs in Ontario again.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We have invested in clean air and the clean energy jobs that go along with it. You know, from the depths of the economic recession, we've attracted $27-billion worth of investment to the province of Ontario. Those billions of dollars of investment have already produced 20,000 jobs, and we'll soon be up to 50,000 jobs. But more than that, Speaker, even more than that, those investments have already meant over a billion dollars in investment for local communities and community owners of property in those areas—a billion dollars of investment from the taxes and the fees. The fact of the matter is that every part of this province has been touched by investments in green energy.

1050

If you don't stand for clean air, if you don't stand for green energy jobs, where do you propose to find the jobs in the future? Come to green.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The government handed out more than $30 million to Navistar, only to watch Navistar then ship nearly 2,000 jobs to Mexico. We requested the contract that was signed with Navistar, and the government, of course, refused to provide it, so we went ahead and we got it through the freedom-of-information process. However, when we received the contract, job targets, investments and all sorts of other pieces of information were censored from the contract.

Can the Premier tell us why the government is hiding information about multi-million-dollar handouts to a company that sent 2,000 jobs to Mexico?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak a little bit about the Navistar situation and Navistar's decision. It was unfortunate it closed its Chatham truck plant after a very long process that goes back to 2002, when it initially announced that it was going to close this plant. I guess the NDP's position, in retrospect, is that we shouldn't have fought hard to save those jobs in Chatham that were preserved for many, many years, since this plant was going to close down in 2002.

Our investment and the federal investment in Navistar, Mr. Speaker, turned out to—in the end, Navistar decided to leave. But our investments preserved those jobs in Chatham for many, many years, and we did indeed hold them accountable for the investments that they did not make on top of what they were supposed to make, and we did claw back a portion of the amount that they received.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I'll remind the minister that the NDP's position is that there should be strings attached to the money that the Liberals give away to these corporations.

Navistar broke their contract. In August 2011, then-Minister of Economic Development Sandra Pupatello told the Windsor Star that she didn't expect to recoup very much at all of the $30-million investment.

Will the Premier tell us exactly how much he expects to recoup and why the then minister didn't think it was going to be very much at all?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to share with the member the amount that we got back. I believe it's in the range of $5 million to $6 million in total that came back to the province as a result of this investment.

The fact is that Navistar made a $151-million investment following the negotiations with the federal and provincial governments. They fell short of the investments they were going to make; they were going to make an investment of $173 million. In all, they didn't make the entire investment they were going to make. But at the end of the day, what happened is, people stayed working in Chatham; hundreds of workers stayed working there over many, many years. Eventually, Navistar decided to leave. We regret that decision, but this government stood up for those workers and we fought hard for their jobs, and that's something we're proud of doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, Navistar's US employment levels are up 166% since 2010. In Springfield, Ohio, Navistar is adding new union jobs to their working ranks. As the Premier may know, Ohio provides job creation tax credits instead of handouts to companies. We have put forward positive proposals to actually help create good jobs in this province, but Ontario keeps following a failed strategy of handouts to companies that ship jobs away.

Is the Premier going to listen to us, or is he going to stick to the status quo that just hasn't been working in Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, it's becoming increasingly obvious that the NDP are just not on our side when we make important investments that leverage private sector investments in this province and create jobs. It's becoming increasingly obvious that the NDP are just not on the side of Ontario workers. They used to be one day; I don't know what happened.

Mr. Speaker, why would the NDP not want to support our investments, for instance, in Kellogg Canada in Belleville, which created 60 jobs? Why would they not want to support our investments in Anaergia in Burlington, which created 206 jobs? Why would they not want to be supporting our investments in Liquiforce in Kingsville, 88 jobs; or how about the GE smart grid in Markham, 146 jobs?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I can go on and on. We are working very hard—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Brad Duguid: —making important investments.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance recently called on the federal government to end corporate income tax writeoffs for luxury business perks like sports boxes and meals. Now, if the minister has a problem with this sort of writeoff, why did he sign the HST agreement that does the exact same thing?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, in fact, that's just simply inaccurate. The HST doesn't do the same such thing, so that's just fiction on the part of the leader of the third party, and that's part of her problem—they just don't get it.

Mr. Drummond indicated in his report and strongly recommended as we move forward that we need to eliminate what he termed tax expenditures; that is, areas where government chooses to forgo revenue for a couple of reasons: One, they're not very accountable; two, as Mr. Drummond indicated, we now have a very competitive corporate tax system. No one less than President Obama is now advocating a similar thing.

I hope the leader of the third party would support us as we continue to build a competitive tax structure for all businesses and individuals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, in tough times, generous handouts like these on luxury items make very little sense, especially to families who are paying more than ever and watching things like emergency rooms across the province shut down. Now, if the minister opposes these kinds of handouts, why is Ontario piling on and planning to increase the giveaways by over $1 billion annually, allowing businesses to write off their HST as well?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: You know, the member opposite might want to turn to her colleague immediately right, who was on TFO supporting subsidy to the horse-

racing industry, Mr. Speaker. We managed to capture that.

Mr. Speaker, I would say this: The NDP—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That indicates how they're galloping off in—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As soon as I get quiet, I get someone who likes to use the quiet to shout something. The member from Simcoe–Grey and the member from Nepean–Carleton will come to order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That shows how the NDP are galloping off in every direction possible. The fact is, we will be bringing forward a budget. I do agree with the member opposite, unlike the federal government, that health care and education should be a priority over supporting generous corporate tax cuts that are designed and were brought into place, as Mr. Drummond pointed out, at a time when the tax system wasn't competitive. Now that it's competitive, we think they need to be looked at.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: On the particular one she mentioned, we would need the federal government—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Look, I'd like to remind a couple of you of a few things: Number one, I've made it quite clear that when I say, "Thank you," that should be the moment in which you sit down, after the answer when I ask you, "Answer" or ask you, "Question," and I don't have to stand up. If I have to stand up, it means that you're ignoring the Chair. That's not appropriate.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, we hear a lot of hot air from the minister and a lot of the same old ideas. The minister called those handouts a subsidy. Now, how can he claim on the one hand that the corporate income tax loophole is a bad one and should be closed while, at the same time, the HST loophole is a good one and should be open?

1100

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, the member opposite doesn't understand how it works. The NDP are trying to have it every which way. They want to raise corporate taxes; they want to keep these generous subsidies in place. They voted against it when we cut personal taxes on the first income tax bracket and took 90,000 people off the tax rolls entirely.

Mr. Speaker, we have created a competitive tax environment for business. We welcome some of her proposals; they're very reasonable. We look forward to working with the third party after we bring in the budget to ensure that our tax system and our economy continue to be fair and competitive for all Ontarians.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. The Minister of Health has agreed to support the establishment of an all-party select committee if it is the will of the Legislature. The PC caucus and the NDP caucus expressed their will more than a week ago in a joint press conference.

We continue to hear from front-line paramedics, dispatchers and people in administration at Ornge that, because senior managers are still in charge there, nothing has changed. They want to come forward. They want to give us information about how we can restore confidence in Ontario's air ambulance service.

I would like to know from the minister: When can we expect to have a motion tabled that will establish a select committee of the Legislature on Ornge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, it's very clear that the issue of Ornge is one that is of significant interest to the people of this Legislature. There will be several opportunities for members of this Legislature to have much by way of conversation about Ornge. We will be introducing legislation that will bring enhanced transparency, accountability and oversight to Ornge. That, of course, will go to committee. The Auditor General will be releasing his report shortly. In fact, I have exercised section 17 of the Auditor General Act and I'm asking him to table that as quickly as possible. I fully expect that members of the Legislature will want to examine that as well.

We believe in transparency. We believe that sunshine is the best disinfectant. The members of this Legislature will have ample opportunity to talk about Ornge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, we don't want to have a conversation about Ornge; we want to have a select committee so that we can get to the bottom of what that issue is.

Front-line employees at Ornge are getting more frustrated by the day, and it's precisely because of the kind of rhetoric that we're hearing from the minister today. They hear the minister quoting CVs of board members. They see the minister condoning the ongoing work of front-line senior managers whose fingerprints are all over the mess at Ornge. Patients are still at risk on a daily basis because the minister refuses to act.

Here's from an email this morning from an employee:

"I look forward to seeing an all-party select committee concerning Ornge. I have information that will shed some light on the mindset of personnel at the head office."

Speaker, why can't the minister understand how important that select committee is and that we have to get to the bottom of it? Why will the government not give us what she promised—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's very important that we let those objective reviews take place. The OPP is engaged in an investigation about some of the allegations at Ornge—the Auditor General, Speaker.

My focus is on moving forward. My focus is on fixing the problems at Ornge. We are taking important, significant steps in that regard, and front-line staff tell me that they can see a tangible difference in the quality of care that they are allowed to deliver now at Ornge.

It's important that we continue to make progress at Ornge. Part of that is a new performance agreement; part of that is new legislation. I'm sure the member opposite will have a lot to say when that legislation is introduced, and I look forward to hearing what he and other members have to say about this legislation.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^me^ France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Speaker, the Premier hasn't answered a single question in this House about Ornge. Since more information surfaced about his top adviser receiving a 35-page document outlining the web of for-profit—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham will withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^me^ France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; sorry. My question is simple: Will the Premier, not his Minister of Health, explain to Ontarians why his top adviser didn't raise alarm bells before Ornge hit the 6 o'clock news?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think it's very important that people understand that the January meeting has been in the public domain for some time. There was a series of steps that did result, Speaker, that culminated in my calling the senior leadership of Ornge into my boardroom and telling them that I expected them to co-operate with the Auditor General, to co-operate with my ministry officials and release information that had been requested for some time.

When that information finally started to be released, it became apparent that there were serious problems at Ornge. We're acting on that information. We've pulled in resources, including a forensic audit team from the Ministry of Finance. That work is under way now, Speaker. The OPP is investigating.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^me^ France Gélinas: Back to the Premier, Mr. Speaker: This morning the Premier put all the blame on Dr. Mazza, but we know that three employees from the Premier's office, including his principal secretary, were told about the Ornge scheme 14 months ago. Has the Premier spoken to his adviser about what they knew about Ornge? And if so, how come it didn't raise alarm bells before it hit the front page of the paper?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, there are significant changes under way at Ornge right now. As I have said, the front-line staff acknowledge that and are very grateful for the steps we have taken.

As we move forward to rebuild Ornge, I look forward to the co-operation and the input from all members of this Legislature. The new legislation will allow us to have much more oversight. It will set the stage for a stronger air ambulance service as we move forward. But I have every confidence in the new leadership to make the kind of changes that we all expect as Ontarians.

CONCUSSIONS

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Education. Before I came to Queen's Park, I had two careers: one as a nurse and the other as a school board trustee. As both a health care professional and an educator, I have a unique perspective on the dangers that head injuries pose to our children.

Mr. Speaker, concussions are a growing problem. A concussion is described as a mild traumatic brain injury, and it usually happens after a blow to the head. As we learn more about concussions, we learn how big an impact brain injuries can have on people, especially our kids and teens.

Would the Minister of Education please tell the House what the government is doing to protect kids from head injuries?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for Scarborough–Agincourt for the question and her interest in this important issue. As I said yesterday, concussions don't discriminate. They can derail the career of our best hockey players in North America, and we saw one of them being able to return to play and return to contact yesterday. But they can also derail the academic careers of our students, and yesterday we heard from students, student athletes, whose academic careers had been derailed as a result of concussions. What we've learned is that we haven't always responded in the right way. We haven't known enough about concussions.

We do know now, and that's why we've introduced legislation to make sure that all of our boards, all of our teachers, all of our parents and all of our students know how to protect themselves, how to prevent a concussion, how to manage a concussion and make sure that when they do return to play or return to learn, they do so in a way that keeps the health of their brain—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her response. There was a recent story in a local Ontario newspaper about a teenager who suffered from a concussion while cheerleading. She had difficulties returning to her studies and her parents are concerned about the impact that her head injury has had on her grades.

1110

Sometimes post-concussion symptoms like headaches and dizziness can last for weeks or even months after the

initial injuries. As the minister said, concussions can be tricky to diagnose.

Can the minister tell us how Bill 39 can help to protect students and provide support to teachers and parents from concussions?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Unfortunately, Speaker, the story that my colleague read in the paper is all too common. What Charles Tator, one of the amazing experts in Ontario, told us yesterday is that the best thing we can do to protect our kids is empower them: have them know and understand, and how to describe what they're feeling—what has happened as a result of that injury.

Bill 39 is just one part of a cross-ministry comprehensive strategy that brings together the Ministry of Tourism and Culture and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to boost awareness across the province, to make sure that all of us have the information that we need to make the right decisions to protect our kids in our schools, in our parks, in our playgrounds and in our homes. We will make sure that our kids are healthy and safe in Ontario.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. For six years, the Nishnawbe Aski Nation has been requesting a coroner's investigation into the death of Sheila Childsforever, a 54-year-old woman who died on an Ornge air ambulance, but the request has been denied for six years. Now the CBC has uncovered an initial coroner's investigation statement which states that the delay in the air ambulance service "had some bearing on this patient's outcome."

Minister, given the mounting evidence that the operational protocols at Ornge have put lives at risk and may possibly have contributed to patient deaths, will you now accept our call for a select committee to make sure all lives are protected in the future?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite knows that it is the coroner who decides whether a coroner's inquest will be held or not, so I would hope that the member would recall that in her questions.

However, Speaker, what I can tell you is that I have to take exception to a comment she made. We are very proud of the safety record at Ornge. That is not to say that there isn't more that can be done, and that's why the new board is very much focused on measuring safety, on reporting safety. In fact, in our new legislation, we will be requiring Ornge to notify the public of their quality improvement plan, just like our hospitals have done, because we know that if we measure it, we can improve it. That's vitally important when it comes to safety and quality of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, I didn't ask for a coroner's inquest. I asked for a select committee.

Each day we hear of new deaths that occurred when people were being transported by Ornge. I raised one about the gentleman from Sault Ste. Marie the other day.

The public in the province of Ontario have lost confidence in Ornge. It is time to investigate what happened in the past and restore that public confidence. Moreover, the families of those who have died are looking for answers, just as the Nishnawbe Aski Nation is.

I say to you today, Minister, I believe these deaths and all of the other questions underscore the need for a select committee. Will you restore public confidence and file a motion for a select committee?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, there is a lot of work going on right now. There is the work of the Auditor General. The Auditor General will, of course, report to this Legislature, and I fully expect that members of this Legislature will have questions concerning the Auditor General's report. The OPP is doing their work. We must let them do their work. We are introducing legislation. That legislation will go to committee.

We are moving forward on bringing change to Ornge, and that work, I expect, is supported by the people of this province. They want to know that they can count on air ambulance; they want to know that we're fixing the problems and that we're taking steps to make sure they don't happen again.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines: Members of KI First Nation are here again today to fight for their rights, as this government has failed to respect the moratorium on KI land. God's Lake Resources has refused to stop exploration on KI's traditional land, and they're set to start drilling at any time.

This government made changes to the Mining Act that were meant to assure First Nations that conflicts would be minimized and that they would be equal partners. It's clear that this has not been the case. Why does this government allow the escalation of tension to continue on this issue, and why won't the minister meet with Chief Donny Morris to work out a solution?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Nothing can be farther from the truth than that—what was said in the form of a question. Over the course of the last three years, our ministry people asked to meet with the KI community to talk about those issues. To date, that request has not been answered. But, because we understand the sensitivity within that particular area, we withdrew those lands from exploration and development.

We believe that it is very, very important that everyone, as this government does, understands its duty to consult, its duty to engage, to ensure that a First Nations community and a mining company come together so that there can be some commonality of purpose and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's true that over the weekend the government removed land from development, but it failed to deal with the most pressing issue, which is

God's Lake Resources that is scheduled to start drilling soon.

Not long after members of KI were thrown in jail for standing up for their community, this government promised a Mining Act that would respect First Nations, but drilling is still being planned on sacred burial sites.

I will ask again: Why does this government allow the escalation of tension to continue on this issue, and why won't the minister meet with Chief Donny Morris to work out a solution?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I'm not going to repeat what I said, but we have been, for the last three years, trying to get a meeting with the community so that we can talk about their concerns. That offer is still on the table.

But let me tell you: We are doing anything but raising the temperature; in fact, we are lowering the temperature to ensure that that type of negotiation can take place. Our modernization of the Mining Act clearly indicates that we support the Supreme Court of Canada's rulings that there must be a duty to consult. There has to be also a reciprocal duty to respond.

We understand the importance of dialogue, of discussion, because we want to ensure that everyone maximizes the opportunities there are with regard to mineral exploration and development.

FIREFIGHTERS

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The people of my riding, Pickering–Scarborough East, know how vitally important firefighters are to Ontario families. In fact, I know this first-hand, coming from a long line of firefighters—my father and my two uncles—and I know of the great work that firefighters do in Pickering–Scarborough East.

It's important that emergency services are integrated and seamlessly delivered to provide the best possible care to those who need it most. All Ontarians understand how every second counts when responding to an emergency call. The faster our first responders are able to respond to an emergency, the better their chances are for our folks affected by emergencies and to allow the responders to do the great work that they do. Furthermore, I move we continue to build a patient-centred health care system.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister how she will work to improve care for patients, particularly those in emergency dispatch systems.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks very much to the member from Pickering–Scarborough East for the question. I'm very proud of our early adopters program, which will begin later this month. This is a program that notifies both fire and ambulance simultaneously in the event of an emergency call for medical assistance. It means that patients will get faster care when they need it the most.

1120

I'm very pleased that our government is supporting this program. It's more than $4.3 million over the next five years. We're going to have four pilot sites. Those pilot sites are in Kitchener, in Mississauga, in Barrie and in Guelph. Speaker, 911 operators will have access to a real-time view of ambulance locations. It means faster access to care when people need it the most.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you. Just recently, my constituents in Pickering–Scarborough East—and all Ontarians, for that matter—were reminded of the vital role our front-line responders play when they witnessed the efforts to help those injured in the tragic Via Rail train crash in Burlington. The Toronto Sun reported that "it was a real show of teamwork as police, fire, ambulance and CN and Via Rail staff worked in unison to identify who was pinned on the train, who was hurt and who needed to be treated first." Our firefighters respond to tragic accidents; that's the nature of their jobs. They support victims in life-threatening situations.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, can you explain what the McGuinty government has done to help support Ontario firefighters?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Let me thank the member from Pickering–Scarborough East for raising this important issue. First, I want to offer my deep condolences to the families of the victims, and I wish a quick recovery to all of those who were injured in the tragic accident.

Secondly, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the firefighters who are here today and those who are at home keeping us safe. Thank you very much.

That's why the McGuinty government passed presumptive legislation supporting firefighters who develop cancer or suffer a heart injury as a result of their jobs, providing compensation to the families of firefighters who suffer from work-related injuries unless shown otherwise—specifically, eight forms of cancer and heart injury suffered within 24 hours of fighting a fire. So I want to thank them all for getting up every day and making sure that we are all safe in our communities.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: No one is more disappointed at the minister's hands-off attitude at Ornge than the front-line paramedics, pilots and dispatchers, the people who work there—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the minister?

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health.

No one is more disappointed in the minister's attitude. She refers to the Auditor General's report. She refers to police investigations. She refers to legislation that she'll bring forward. None of that has anything to do with our request for a select committee. Those can take place in parallel. I point the minister to the Gomery investigation, which had an RCMP investigation going on in parallel.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Frank Klees: I say to the minister now: Allow those things to take place, but express some urgency at what is going on at Ornge. Allow those employees to come forward and testify and bring forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I remind the member to please adhere to what I requested.

Minister of Health?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I absolutely have a sense of urgency. That's why I've taken the very significant steps that I have taken to clean up what we found at Ornge. That's why I called in a forensic audit team; that's an extraordinary step that is very rarely taken. I referred this matter to the Ontario Provincial Police. They are doing an investigation. That reflects the urgency of the situation.

We have replaced the entire board of directors with a very high-calibre board of very competent people who take their responsibility to the public very, very seriously. We have replaced the CEO. There are many changes that have already been made at Ornge, and there will be more changes. We are driving forward with a new performance agreement and with new legislation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, what we see across the way from the minister, as well as from the Premier, who has refused to answer even the most basic of questions about this important issue, is simply a waste of time while patients continue to be at risk, according to information we have from front-line medics, from front-line pilots and from front-line administrators at Ornge.

Speaker, if the Premier and the minister refuse to show leadership on this issue and bring forward a motion, we will show leadership on this issue. We will table our motion by 5 o'clock this evening to ensure that this House has an opportunity to express its will on that issue.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think that the people of this province expect me to take my responsibility as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care very, very seriously. I do take that responsibility seriously, and that is why I have taken the very unusual steps that I have taken at Ornge.

We are moving forward with new legislation. We're moving forward with a new performance agreement. We have the right board in place. Barry McLellan is heading up the safety committee. Patient safety is the number one issue. Winding down the for-profits is under way. We are addressing the fiscal challenges and fiscal irregularities.

We also need to remind all people who work in health care that they have a fundamental responsibility to the people of this province. They must never, ever lose sight of their responsibility to the people they are there to serve.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Today, the Premier announced an MPP pay freeze. He said that it's about leading by example. So my question is: Will he finally put a hard cap on the salaries of CEOs in hospitals and other public sector CEOs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, we are facing a significant challenge in terms of the deficit before us, but it's also a time of great opportunity for us to transform government and deliver better services in a more efficient way.

We've asked our teachers to be part of the solution. It's not an easy thing we've asked of them, but we've been great partners. I'm confident we'll find a way forward. We're asking our doctors to be part of this. In fact, we intend to ask all our public sector partners to be part of the solution when it comes to eliminating our deficit and preserving the quality, and indeed enhancing the quality, of our public services.

I think it's important that all of us lead by example. We've had an MPP freeze in place for three years. I am proposing that we introduce a bill in this House that would extend that for another two years. That would be five successive years of pay freezes for Ontario MPPs, so that when we come to the challenge, we do so from an exemplary position.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the fact remains that the Premier's so-called wage freeze for hospital executives has enough holes in it to drive a forklift through. It doesn't apply to bonuses and other perks, which are going through the roof.

Last month, when CEO contracts were revealed by hospitals, families found out that the former CEO of London's hospitals received a $1.2-million bonus just for staying on, on top of his $800,000 annual salary.

To make sure that every single dollar goes to front-line care, why won't the Premier just put a hard cap on CEO salaries in hospitals and the public sector?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, the fact of the matter is that my honourable colleague is on to an important issue.

We have done some things. We have made some inroads. We have, for example, mandated that hospital boards tie CEO compensation to performance, and there are specific measures that they can follow in that regard. But the honourable member opposite does raise an issue, and I would like her to know that I have asked the Minister of Finance to give some very careful consideration to additional measures—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —they can't take yes for an answer, Speaker—to explore some potential additional measures in the budget that address the specific kinds of concerns raised by my honourable colleague.

FARM SAFETY

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question this morning is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. For many of my constituents in Peterborough, farm safety will be particularly top of mind, as next week is recognized as Canadian Agricultural Safety Week.

1130

Farms are work sites like any others, and farm workers, too, must be provided with a safe and healthy work environment. Farmers and farm workers know that everyone has a role to play in ensuring that there are viable solutions for keeping them safe on the farm. Most farmers tell me it's an important and essential component of their day-to-day farm operations.

Minister, what kinds of initiatives are being undertaken by your ministry and our partners in the agricultural sector to promote safe farm practices in Peterborough and in Ontario?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member from Peterborough for that question. Speaker, our government is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all farm workers. The Canadian Agricultural Safety Week, of course, gives us an opportunity to reflect on that work and to see just how we can improve on it.

For some 15 years now, my ministry has been working with Safe Workplace Promotion Services Ontario, and in partnership with OMAFRA, we've initiated a number of safety opportunities. The agricultural Safety Days, for example, have allowed us to focus on educational safety and training for children and their families. Our Safety Days summer camp program has reached about 1,800 children each year. Of course, we hold special events at the plowing match, in schools and at fairs, and we've even partnered with the Mennonites to do special programs there.

I welcome all members of the House to join us in celebrating agricultural safety—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you, Minister. With that full and comprehensive answer, there will be no need for a late show on that one.

I know that my constituents will be happy to hear that our government is actively partnering with Safe Workplace Promotion Services to promote a number of safety initiatives across the province.

The people of Peterborough riding know that farmers are an important part of our economy. They work incredibly hard to make sure that we have food on our tables each and every day. But the work they do is often hazardous and, as I have previously mentioned, may lead to serious workplace injuries.

Many of the people in my riding work in the agricultural sector and face these inherent risks each and every day. Minister, can you tell my constituents what our government is doing to protect the health and safety of Ontarians who work in our agricultural sector?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: For another full and comprehensive answer, I'll defer to the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I am pleased to take such a timely question from the member from Peterborough.

I want to assure the people of Peterborough and everyone across Ontario that our government values the hard work that our farmers do every single day to make sure that food comes to our tables. That's why, in June 2006, our government extended the Occupational Health and Safety Act to include farming operations for the first time ever. Employers in the agricultural industry are now required by law to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances to protect their workers.

The Ministry of Labour has trained approximately 180 inspectors and will continue to train new inspectors on issues inherent to the health and safety of workers on farms. Since 2006, our inspectors have visited more than 850 farms and will continue to conduct both reactive and field visits and proactively inspect farms across the province.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question this morning is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, your energy plan has created some of North America's highest energy prices, causing Ontario to lose 300,000 manufacturing, forestry and mining jobs.

Now, with those companies closed and people out of work, we're generating more power than we need. Let me paint you a picture. Now we're paying Quebec and the US $2 billion to take that surplus power. They use that cheap power to lure even more of our Ontario manufacturers to their jurisdictions.

Minister, do you not see this vicious job-killing cycle that you've created? Will you agree to cancel the FIT subsidies that have caused this problem?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Now, apparently, the solar panels on North Bay city hall are single-handedly responsible for the worldwide economic recession.

Just a few facts, Speaker. From the depths of the recession, we've attracted billions of dollars worth of investment, thousands of jobs already in every part of the province. In fact, you'd be surprised what people say when they're in their own communities speaking truth to their neighbours. "Taking advantage of locally available green power resources is a good fit with the long-range development strategy we have for the community"—from the MPP from Nipissing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Minister, this is no joke. You continue to pay outrageous subsidies for companies to produce wind and solar power that we clearly don't need.

The 1,700 megawatts of wind and solar you're paying for today have caused seniors' hydro bills to skyrocket. Now you're planning on producing a total of 10,700 megawatts from wind and solar.

Minister, you're planning on making this problem six times worse than it is today. Minister, you're going the wrong way. When will you agree to cancel the FIT subsidies and bring some relief to employers and Ontario families?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We know where we were: unreliable power, billions for imports, generators on the street corner. Ontario families and businesses have had a lot of work to do. Now we have to pay for some of the work that the party opposite should have done, and

we've found the opportunity to invest not only in clean air but the green, clean-energy jobs that go with it.

When the party opposite speaks truth to their neighbours, many of them are very supportive of the opportunities this brings to their local communities. That is a very telling fact.

We'll continue to work on the price of energy, we'll continue to deliver reliable energy and we'll continue to deliver the clean air and green energy jobs that go along with it.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, by your own admission, our provincial jail system is at about 95% capacity, and those numbers are forecast to increase. Yet, your ministry is continuing on a proposal to close the Sarnia jail facility, with no consideration for the impact on the workers, no consideration for the impact of native communities in that area, no consideration for the communities that rely on that jail as a functional part of their community. Why is the McGuinty government moving ahead with this decision without providing any answers, any financial considerations to the community and to the workers of that jail and the community of Sarnia?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you to the member for his very important question.

This government has been addressing the capacity of our jails. We are building two new jails: one in Windsor and one in Toronto. We are closing our old jails, which are very expensive, with very little or no rehabilitation for our inmates, and we are opening new jails with increased capacity.

But you're raising a good point. C-10 is going to have a great impact on our capacity, and we are calling on you and on the opposition to talk to the federal government about it.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to bring to your attention, in the Speaker's gallery, the member from Perth in the 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 32nd, 33rd and 34th Parliaments, the Speaker of the 34th Parliament, Hugh Edighoffer.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm kind of hoping I receive that respect when I'm finished.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'd like to correct the record on something I said yesterday. Yesterday, I said that this government had increased funding to child care by 46%. In fact, that's the figure of how much we've increased education funding over the past eight years. We've actually increased funding for child care in Ontario by 63%, and I thought it was important to correct it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. It is a point of order to correct your own record.

VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Speaker, on a point of order: Prior to question period, I was going to introduce Trevor Ford, president of the Woodstock firefighters' association, but I was not allotted time. So on that point, I rise to introduce him here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is not a point of order, but I'm glad you introduced him.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: On a similar point of order, I want to welcome to the Legislature several people from the Heart and Stroke Foundation: Tom McAllister is with us, and Mary Lewis and Dr. Andrew Pipe. I know all members of the Legislature welcome them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That too is not a point of order, but we're awfully glad that they're here.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, being relatively new to the Legislature, I want to see if this is a point of privilege or a point of order, welcoming Robert Cooper, father of page William Cooper from Canadian Martyrs School in St. Catharines; and Dave Cooper, William's uncle. Was that a point of order? If not, I would simply like to introduce them and welcome them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The dean of the House is correct: It's not a point of order. We welcome our guests.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: On a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to introduce firefighters from the Pickering Professional Firefighters Association. We have Colin Arnott, vice-president, and Mike Palachik, secretary of the association. I want to welcome them today. Thank you for being here.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Speaker, a point of order: Earlier, I wasn't able to introduce a couple of people who came in today to visit us: Cecilia Begg, Randy Nanokeesic, Richard Anderson, Luke Sainnawap, Mary Jane Crowe and Steven Chapman of KI First Nation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Huron–Bruce.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much. Earlier today, we missed an opportunity to introduce some people who travelled to Toronto to support our leader, Tim Hudak, with his private member's bill looking at affordable energy and the restoration of local decision-making.

I'd like to welcome to the House Catherine Bayne from Lake Superior Action-Research-Conservation; Barbara Ashbee from Dufferin county; Joseph Leung from Meaford; Jim Brunow from Meaford; Cindy Sutch, board member from Save the Oak Ridges Moraine, city

of Kawartha Lakes; Warren Howard, councillor, North Perth; Lorrie Gillis, health concerns, Grey Highlands; David Cohen, Toronto; Orville Walsh, Prince Edward county; Andre Den Tandt, Owen Sound; and Ron Bolingbroke from Meaford as well.

Ms. Laurie Scott: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to welcome Jerry Walker from Haliburton, who is here today with Ducks Unlimited.

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to recognize the presence of two great firefighters from my riding of Markham–Unionville: Scott Daniel and Joe Hill. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: It's my pleasure to introduce Mr. Mark Holland—

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Yay, Mark!

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Yay, Mark! He's the director of government relations and health partnerships with the Heart and Stroke Foundation, and organizer of the Heart at the Park event here today at Queen's Park. Mark is a former member of our federal Parliament. Welcome, Mark.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to have in the gallery Dan VanderLelie—he's the president of the Burlington professional firefighters; Kevin Ritchie; Chris Burville, the trustee; and Paul Cunningham, the secretary. I had a beautiful lunch today with the fellas. Thank you, boys.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased today—I seek your indulgence as well. Because of the nature of my remarks, I do want to add a bit to the end.

I'm proud to stand and honour in this House and to congratulate a constituent of mine. This is not just any ordinary constituent, Mr. Speaker. He is eight years old. He has won almost $3 million in prize money, and he's a big bay trotting superstar. My constituent is a horse named San Pail. San Pail was recently named horse of the year, trotter of the year and older male trotter of the year at the prestigious Dan Patch Awards in Orlando, Florida—actually, a world champion. I'd like to congratulate co-owner and breeder Glenn Van Camp from Port Perry, in my riding of Durham.

It is important to recognize this achievement in light of the McGuinty government's plan to meddle in the successful slots-at-racetracks partnership. The partnership creates skilled champions like San Pail and victories for Ontario generally in tourism and other areas. It produces future champions on such farms as Tara Hills, which was founded by the late Peter Heffering and his son David. It is a world-class facility right here in Ontario, the best in the world, one would argue. Also, this farm is in my riding.

I call on the government to work co-operatively with the horse racing industry and owners to support the benefits of this to agriculture.

And it's in this climate that I do want to take one moment to mention Peter Heffering, who is in the Agricultural Hall of Fame. He's the breeder, first known as a Holstein breeder: His Hanover Hill Holsteins was arguably the most famous Holstein herd in the world, and he is in the hall of fame. He passed away just last week at the age of 80. He should be respected and remembered as a leader in agriculture and one of my constituents. Thank you.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

Mr. Rosario Marchese: In late February, Toronto city council asked the province for an exemption from the Ontario Municipal Board. It's time we took this issue seriously and consider whether Toronto really needs the OMB at all.

As an appointed board, the OMB is unaccountable to the people of Ontario. Unlike city councillors or MPPs, these members answer to no one, yet they have considerable power over every community in the province. Municipalities across Ontario spend considerable amounts of time and money on city planning and consultations with their citizens to decide how they can encourage further development while maintaining the unique character of their neighbourhoods. All this effort is wasted when the OMB acts against the interests of these communities.

And make no mistake: The OMB does act against our interests. Developers know Ontario's municipalities often lack the resources to fight an extended OMB appeal. It's an ugly open secret in Ontario and it's time for a change.

Toronto has 44 full-time elected city councillors, an extensive legal department and a professional planning department. Surely the city is able to decide on its own official plans. Surely the decisions of the local community and its elected representatives should not be overruled by a handful of unelected members accountable to no one. Toronto city council has asked to be exempted from the OMB; I will be introducing a bill shortly to do just that.

HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, the Heart and Stroke Foundation is a volunteer-based health charity that leads in eliminating heart disease and stroke and reducing their impact through the advancement of research and promotion of healthy living, led and supported by a force of more than 130,000 volunteers, many of whom are here today.

In 2010, the foundation invested more than $106 million into research, health promotion and community programs.

The foundation aims to build healthier hearts and minds across Canada by bringing life-saving knowledge to the communities we serve, through their local offices and the health care providers they support with education and resources.

It is my great pleasure to sponsor their Heart in the Park event today at Queen's Park, and I encourage all members to attend their MPP health circuit and meet with the volunteers who make this foundation so great—committee room number 2, I believe.

Thank you, Mark Holland.

OAK RIDGES MORAINE

Mrs. Julia Munro: The Oak Ridges moraine is one of Ontario's great natural treasures, but it remains at risk. A series of reports by the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation have revealed a decline in the moraine's health, and shortcomings in the current conservation plan. Grassland birds are in decline, rare habitats are threatened, and only one third of streams are healthy. Dumping of contaminated fill and draining aquifers threaten the precious water resources of the moraine. All this and more, despite the hard work the foundation does to maintain and restore the moraine's health—work such as protecting 5,500 acres through securing land and restoring more than 1,000 acres of significant habitat. Yet the moraine faces greater risks if the moraine foundation cannot continue to fund its work.

More than 23 municipalities located on the moraine have called on the government to continue funding the foundation. They know that the work the foundation does is vital—and the foundation leverages its provincial funding by more than a two-to-one ratio.

I call on the government today to commit to work with the foundation and local residents to preserve this natural treasure.

HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION

M^me^ France Gélinas: I'd like to add my voice to the fact that today is Heart in the Park at Queen's Park. Please join me in recognition of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario's efforts to make Ontario the healthiest province.

Why is this important, Mr. Speaker? Well, because one in three Ontarians die prematurely from heart disease and stroke; it is the number one killer of women; and nine in 10 Canadians have at least one risk factor of heart disease and stroke. The Heart and Stroke Foundation is committed to improving these odds.

Ontarians can live longer, healthier lives, dramatically reducing our health care costs. All that is required is a focus on health promotion and illness prevention. Heart and Stroke has made better health a priority. Let each and every one of us make that same commitment.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation is asking Ontarians to invest at least 0.5% of the provincial budget toward health promotion—0.5% could make all the difference. Why? Because childhood obesity rates have tripled in the last 20 years, because smoking rates have plateaued, and because about one in five Canadians have hypertension—that number is increased to 64% of stroke patients.

The best way to control health care costs is to create the healthiest province, and this is what the Heart and Stroke Foundation is here to do. Let's support them.

CARLETON UNIVERSITY RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all the students who participated this past weekend at the Carleton University Relay for Life. It was held on March 2 from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. on campus. So far, students have raised $72,000 from their effort to help the Canadian Cancer Society.

1510

It was an incredible event, with lots of energy, where students walked all night, with personal stories to share about cancer survivors and helping to ensure that we help more people. Their aim is $84,000, and I am confident that they will be able to accomplish that.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the organizing committee for their hard work. The event coaches were James Armbruster and Komal Minhas, and the other members of the organizing committee are Rebecca Pikor, Kirsten Strom, Dan Dalby, Shanelle Manhue, Ashley Gardner, Kelsey Round, Jill Krajewski, Rob Nettleton, Mitchel Pennell, Pavan Sapra, Pranav Mody, Julia E, Grace Valentine, Kiley Jamieson, Stephanie Desson, Elias Haime, Lyndsay Burman, Tristen Watmough, Jillian Black, Deanne Pittman, Marc Bedard, Adisa Sadja, Karina Pavlenko, Laura Moran, Sylvie Campbell, Amanda Devaney, Heather Page and Christian Bresee.

Congratulations to all the students for their hard work in making Carleton University's Relay for Life a success. I'm sure you will raise your $84,000 by the end of the next couple of weeks.

AUTO INSURANCE FRAUD

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to draw to the attention of the Legislature that this month, March, is national Fraud Prevention Month. The purpose of this month is to raise awareness of fraud in all consumer markets.

I'd like to speak about auto insurance fraud. First off, I'd like to commend the police, investigators with the Insurance Bureau of Canada and all others involved in Project Whiplash last month. This joint project uncovered an intricate and organized auto insurance fraud ring that embezzled over $4 million, and resulted in 37 arrests.

To those who fight against auto insurance fraud on the front line, I want to thank you. Your efforts help protect

innocent ratepayers, because when fraudsters cheat, we all pay through higher premiums.

I also encourage consumers to learn all they can about how to detect and protect themselves from fraud. Your broker is a good place to learn about tips that will help you to be able to detect fraud and prevent it. We all have to work together to tackle this issue.

I call upon this government to establish a special unit of the crown attorneys' office to help prosecute and obtain tough convictions against fraudsters. Fraud accounts for 10% to 15% of our auto insurance premiums, estimated to be about $1.3 billion.

I think it's important that this House stand united with all Ontarians, and takes a tough stance against fraudsters. We will not tolerate those who cheat, and we will do everything we can to ensure that if you defraud the system, you will end up in jail.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Ontarians work hard every day to make better lives for themselves and their children. Our government is hard at work too. And just like families across this province, when times are tough we have to make careful choices: choices that support the needs and aspirations of all Ontarians, choices that will create jobs for Ontario families.

That's why I'm proud that our government is investing in economic development in places where it's really needed, and that's why I'm disappointed that the official opposition voted against the attracting jobs and investment act and the thousands of local jobs it would have created in our communities.

The PCs are putting ideology ahead of helping small business create jobs and attract new investment. This act would help companies across eastern and southwestern Ontario expand their workforce, buy state-of-the-art equipment and compete and win in the new global economy. The Conservatives are using the global recession to push an ideology, tearing down rather than helping build a stronger economy.

The NDP have been silent on eliminating the deficit and creating jobs. They're quick to criticize but have put forward no suggestions of their own. Our government, on the other hand, has had a balanced plan and is making thoughtful choices to eliminate the deficit, grow the economy and create jobs.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The growth plan for northern Ontario, established under Ontario's Places to Grow Act, is quite simply a failure. Despite noting that North Bay, Sudbury, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie and Thunder Bay are economic hubs that benefit all of northern Ontario, and that half of northerners live in these five cities, only two, Sudbury and Thunder Bay, have been designated as growth plan pilot site regional planning areas and have received provincial funding to develop regional economic plans.

The city of North Bay unanimously passed resolution 2011-816, which resolves that "the province, through the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, ... immediately designate all five cities in northern Ontario as anchors and growth plan ... sites for their respective regional economic planning areas, thereby enabling the cities of North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie and Timmins to serve the same growth plan role in their respective regions as Thunder Bay and the city of Greater Sudbury...."

It further urges the minister to provide the necessary resources and support for Timmins, North Bay and Sault Ste. Marie to develop regional economic plans.

We need growth and funding support for all northern Ontario, not just in the ridings of the minister and his predecessor.

SPECIAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a special report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario entitled Ready for Change? An Assessment of Ontario's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

REDUCING AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE PREMIUMS BY ELIMINATING FRAUD ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES PRIMES D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE PAR L'ÉLIMINATION DES ACTIVITÉS FRAUDULEUSES

Mrs. Mangat moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to encourage the disclosure of and investigate fraudulent activity in connection with automobile insurance claims and to amend the Independent Health Facilities Act with respect to licensee requirements / Projet de loi 41, Loi visant à encourager la divulgation des activités frauduleuses en ce qui a trait aux demandes d'indemnités d'assurance-automobile, visant les enquêtes en la matière et modifiant la Loi sur les établissements de santé autonomes relativement aux exigences applicables aux titulaires de permis.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the bill be read for the first time? Agreed.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for a short statement.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Auto insurance fraud has been a very serious problem in many parts of Ontario. The

purpose of this bill is to protect those individuals who report auto insurance fraud. By protecting such individuals, we will be taking a proactive step towards eliminating fraud and reducing automobile insurance premiums.

AFFORDABLE ENERGY AND RESTORATION OF LOCAL DECISION MAKING ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE ET LE RÉTABLISSEMENT DE LA PRISE DE DÉCISIONS LOCALE

Mr. Hudak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Environmental Protection Act with respect to renewable energy / Projet de loi 42, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité et la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement en ce qui concerne l'énergie renouvelable.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the bill be read for the first time? Agreed.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm very pleased to table today the Affordable Energy and Restoration of Local Decision Making Act. It has three major components, as you can see from the explanatory note. If enacted into law, this bill would do the following three things:

First, reframe Ontario's energy policy as market-driven and end the feed-in tariff subsidies.

Second, require the energy minister to consult first-tier municipalities on existing contracts for industrial wind and solar farms not yet connected to the grid.

Finally, re-empower municipalities to decide how and where large-scale wind and solar farms can be located in the community, if at all.

1520

INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (ELEMENTS IN CLASSIFYING RISKS FOR AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES ASSURANCES (ÉLÉMENTS SERVANT AU CLASSEMENT DES RISQUES EN MATIÈRE D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE)

Mr. Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to amend the Insurance Act with respect to the elements used in classifying risks for a coverage or category of automobile insurance / Projet de loi 43, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances en ce qui concerne les éléments servant au classement des risques dans le cadre d'une couverture ou catégorie d'assurance-automobile.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the bill be read for the first time? Agreed.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Mario Sergio: The bill amends the Insurance Act, and it requires automobile insurers to use a person's driving record, a person's age and the type of automobile in classifying risks for coverage or a category of automobile insurance. The bill also prohibits automobile insurers from using a person's home address or postal code in classifying such risks. I thank you, Speaker.

FAR NORTH REPEAL ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 ABROGEANT LA LOI SUR LE GRAND NORD

Mr. Norm Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act to repeal the Far North Act, 2010 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 44, Loi abrogeant la Loi de 2010 sur le Grand Nord et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the bill be read for the first time? Agreed.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Miller for a short statement.

Mr. Norm Miller: Mr. Speaker, northern Ontario is being negatively affected by the Far North Act. First Nations are opposed to the bill. Many northern communities are opposed to the bill. Northerners want to see jobs and prosperity in the north. Repealing the Far North Act will help to open the north for economic activity and for job creation, and that's why I brought this bill forward.

INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (RISK CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS FOR AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES ASSURANCES (SYSTÈMES DE CLASSEMENT DES RISQUES EN ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE)

Mr. Singh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to amend the Insurance Act with respect to risk classification systems for automobile insurance / Projet de loi 45, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances à l'égard des systèmes de classement des risques en assurance-automobile.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Shall the bill be read for the first time? Agreed.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Essentially, this bill seeks to amend the Insurance Act to provide safeguards for the community so that an individual's driving record takes precedence over where they live. The act will specify a number of criteria given a weighted preference, and these criteria would ensure that our rural members are not negatively affected but that those in the GTA are treated in a more fair and appropriate means. The criteria would be as follows: driving safety record, but only in respect of accidents where the person is not principally at fault; the number of kilometres driven annually; the driving experience of the individual; as well as the population of the statistical area in which the driver resides, and that's to ensure that we don't negatively impact those who live in smaller communities or rural areas.

This bill, taken together—all the factors from one to four have to be taken as a primary method of assessing risk. Any other factor cannot equal the equivalent of the last factor; that is, driving record is the primary concern in this case, not where you live.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Is there consent? Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item number 22 be waived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business. He moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 22 be waived. Agreed?

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to submit some petitions here that read as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Solray Energy Corp. has given notice of its proposal for a class 3 solar power facility known as Epsom Solar Farm to be located in the township of Scugog; and

"Whereas the site is on prime farmland that has been in" productive use "for many generations; and

"Whereas we consider productive farmland to be of vital importance to farm and rural communities by providing healthy, locally grown food and ensuring the sustainability of Canada's food supply; and

"Whereas class 1 to 5 farmland and land that is zoned rural or agricultural should be protected from the current proposal and similar projects that may be considered in the future; and

"Whereas other sites of less value to agriculture are better locations for solar power developments;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition" the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "not to allow large, industrial ... solar farms on prime agricultural land, and we further express our support for giving local communities, through their elected municipal councils, the power to control and approve large-scale renewable energy developments."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to James Newman, one of the pages here on his second-last day.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to read this petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

"Whereas the Dog Owners' Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law."

I and many thousands of Ontarians agree. I'm going to sign it and give it to David to be delivered to the table.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the residents of Elgin–Middlesex–London are concerned about the sacrifice of 400 acres of prime agricultural land in the town of Belmont to the development of a solar farm despite the Green Energy Act's prohibition of building on such high-grade agricultural land;

"Whereas the company First Solar claims their use of such valuable land is justified under the older renewable energy framework that was in place when the company received its OPA contracts;

"Whereas the government has grandfathered the project into the new Green Energy Act, thereby allowing the company to circumvent any municipal opinion and review;

"Whereas the government has effectively allowed this project to use favourable aspects of two separate regulatory frameworks while avoiding aspects of those same frameworks that are meant to protect one of Ontario's

most vital finite resources: its world-class agricultural land;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To put a moratorium on the solar development in Belmont until the province decides by which set of regulations First Solar is to abide."

I support this petition and affix my signature.

1530

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to present this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas there has been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition. I am pleased to hand it to Katelyn on her second-last day as page.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services' Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

"Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise $13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the art hospital in Markdale;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner."

I sign my name to this and give it to page Mackenzie to deliver to the Clerk.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas there has been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

I agree with this petition. I shall sign it and give it to page Grace.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a fatal motor vehicle collision involving a passenger car and a tractor trailer occurred at approximately 3:10 p.m. on September 19, 2011, on Highway 66 approximately five kilometres west of the Watabeag Lake Road near Matachewan; and

"Whereas there have been numerous accidents on this particular section of highway since this fatality, as well as over many previous years, not all of which appear to have been reported even though numerous complaints have been made; and

"Whereas traffic volumes along Highway 66 into Matachewan have increased exponentially due to the tremendous growth and activity in the area due to the

recent new mine construction and resultant development boom; and

"Whereas even though sections of this highway have been resurfaced in recent years, absolutely nothing has been done to rectify the dangerous S-curves, narrow shoulders, poor signage or inappropriate aggregate materials;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Transportation be immediately directed to engineer, redesign and straighten Highway 66 throughout the dangerous corners. Failing this, on all corners, install rumble strips on the centre line and erect brightly coloured markers throughout the entire turning radius. Finally, the shoulders must be widened and paved so that vehicles can safely get off the travelled portion of roadway."

I fully agree and sign this, and I'd like to give it to page Grace.

TUITION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and welcome back to the Chair.

I have some petitions here from students from the University of Guelph. I notice that the Canadian Federation of Students are here lobbying this government to change its policies, so I am happy to read this petition on their behalf.

"Whereas tuition fees in Ontario have increased by up to 59% since 2006, and students in Ontario pay the highest fees in Canada; and

"Whereas Ontario students owe $37,000 on average after graduation and collectively owe more than $7 billion to the federal government and more than $2 billion to the Ontario government; and

"Whereas tuition fees are the most significant barrier that prevents students from obtaining a post-secondary credential and disproportionately hinders access for students who are low-income, racialized, francophone, aboriginal, queer, transgendered or have a disability; and

"Whereas tuition fee increases have enabled successive Ontario governments to remove funding from the post-secondary education sector, leaving Ontario dead last in per student funding, $15,000 lower per student than Alberta; and

"Whereas, during the 2011 Ontario election, the government was elected in part based on a promise to reduce tuition fees by 30%; and

"Whereas all political parties in Ontario have publicly acknowledged that college and university tuition fees are too high;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario's call to drop tuition fees and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to apply the promised $430 million in funding for grants to reduce tuition fees for all students and progressively reduce fees by 30% over four years, reduce the debt cap and introduce more student grants rather than loans for students, and increase per student funding to the national average."

These are from the University of Guelph. I'm happy to sign them and hand them to page Kriti.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Guelph. Order. The member from Guelph.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A little order. The member from Oxford. The member from Guelph again. Are we finished? Thank you.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: This is from a group of parents in Ottawa–Orléans from the Avalon Public School.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the current enrolment of Avalon Public School is 687 students;

"Whereas the student capacity of the school is 495 students, as determined by the Ministry of Education's own occupancy formula;

"Whereas the issue of overcrowding and lack of space makes it impossible for Avalon Public School to offer full-day kindergarten until the overcrowding issue is addressed;

"Whereas Avalon Public School is located in a high-growth community;

"Whereas the enrolment at Avalon Public School is expected to continue rising at a rate of 10% to 15% a year for the foreseeable future;

"Whereas the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has made building a new school in Avalon a top capital priority;

"We, the undersigned, call on the province of Ontario and Ministry of Education to provide the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board with the necessary funding to build an additional school in Avalon, to open no later than September 2014."

I agree with this petition and I send it forward with Sophia.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition here on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows—this is on renewable energy as well.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a growing body of evidence confirming industrial wind development has serious adverse effects on host communities;

"Whereas over 135 people in Ontario have reported serious negative health effects from wind ... development, and at least a dozen families have been bought out of their homes;

"Whereas Ontario's Green Energy Act has ended local planning control by stripping municipal councils of their rights;

"Whereas 80 municipal councils, representing two million Ontarians, called on the" McGuinty "government to put in place a full moratorium on industrial wind development until an independent epidemiological health study is completed, proper environmental regulations and protections are put in place, and local democracy is restored;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately put a moratorium on all industrial wind proposals; fund an independent epidemiological health study to develop safe setbacks; legislate those findings; develop stringent environmental protection standards for natural areas; and require all projects to comply with regulations based on science"—not political science—"and local planning" should prevail.

1540

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Darren, one of the pages, on his second-last day here.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, I would like to read this petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas there have been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and give it to page Marium to be taken to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

CRÉDITS PROVISOIRES

Hon. John Milloy: I move that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing April 1, 2012, and ending on September 30, 2012, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation for the 2012-13 fiscal year following the voting of supply.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Milloy has moved government motion 19. Debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Mr. Speaker, today I am going to do my maiden speech, and I'm honoured to have some firefighters from Burlington here to listen.

When I first visited the legislative building at Queen's Park as a nine-year-old girl, it seemed like just another field trip. To my child's eyes, this place mostly seemed like a pretty ho-hum museum, one that could really use a few good dinosaurs. But my thinking has changed. I can tell you in all sincerity that there's a world of difference between how entering this building hit me then and how it hits me now. Then, it was a field trip. When I visited again this fall, I got chills. The hairs on the back of my neck stood up, and they still do. Every minute of every day, I am struck by the history of this place. I am equally struck by the role of the Legislature in our future, and I am humbled by the ways in which our work here will influence the lives of those who work for our constituents, our communities and the people of Ontario.

We are all born into different circumstances. Some have a silver spoon in their mouths; others count themselves lucky to be rubbing the tarnish off of someone else's silverware. But not one of us can escape personal challenges. None of us are immune to reversals of fortune, those moments when life throws a stick in your spokes. Case in point: In March of this year, more than 851,000 Canadians used a food bank; almost 40% of them were children—and those numbers are substantially higher than they were three years ago.

Burlington is a prosperous place, but it is by no means immune to the province's economic downturn. Our food bank, Burlington Partnership West, is serving 42% more people this year than it did in 2008, supplying food to more than 7,000 Burlingtonians—and 40% of those are children. We owe it to each other, to our communities and to our children in particular to ensure that basic needs are never compromised in the name of political convenience. Sadly, that is not always the case.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here before the Legislature today because I believe, in my heart of hearts, that this province urgently needs change; real and meaningful change. I saw a Liberal government that for eight years has been deflecting and misdirecting, tap dancing from crisis to crisis, tap dancing while Ontario's economy went from powerhouse to poorhouse. Thankfully, I saw an alterna-

tive. In Ontario PC Party leader Tim Hudak, I saw a passionate voice for progressive change; I saw a champion for small business, a champion for responsible government, a champion for fiscal sanity, a champion of real relief in an age of sound-byte solutions. Above all, I saw a champion for the people—all the people—of Ontario.

After some reflection and a memorable conversation with my loving family and my dear and patient husband, Tim, I made a commitment to the cause of change and I threw my hat in the ring for the PC candidacy of the riding of Burlington. From day to day, in our choices and actions, we create our destiny. Life doesn't make a promise; it extends an opportunity.

So I have no time for negativity and self-pity. There are no guarantees in this world, but also few limits other than those we impose upon ourselves. I entered into politics because I believed that there was potential in my city that had yet to be realized. I believed—and I still do—that yesterday's thinking was not the answer to the challenges of tomorrow. Like most politicians, I wanted to make a difference in my community. It has already been a phenomenal adventure.

Whatever your particular gifts are, public service demands that you dig deeper. I was reminded of that recently when I, along with Burlington Mayor Rick Goldring and Councillor Rick Craven, was debriefed at the site of the tragic Via Rail crash by Burlington Fire Chief Shayne Mintz. Chief Mintz's calm command and level-headed response to an extreme situation gave me comfort; it also made me enormously proud to be a Burlingtonian. So yes, public service asks that you step outside of your comfort zone and find the positive in everything you do: to embrace the upside of everything, even falling down.

Public life asks you to build new skill sets, to question tired old assumptions, to learn strength, but also flexibility and resilience. It forces you to deepen your laugh lines and to laugh hardest at yourself, because most of all, the lesson of public service is that it is always far, far bigger than any one person.

Politics can be personal, but that's not the reason you go to bed at night with your BlackBerry attached to your pyjamas. It's about giving force to the will of your constituents and vigorously defending the best interests of all Ontarians.

I felt pretty secure in seeing myself as a hard worker: I've never been shy about putting in overtime or showing up at my desk on weekends. Then I met my campaign team, a phenomenal group of dedicated and driven volunteers who wanted to see the Tories return to Burlington; volunteers who came out for 18 hours a day, went door to door attached to my hip, and never complained or gave it less than their all.

It is certainly true that Burlington has a long history as a Tory riding. Since Confederation, the Conservative Party has represented the city for more than a century in total, and its hold on the riding has been unbroken for the last 68 years. I clearly wasn't going to be the one to break that.

1550

Just four officials served during that time: Stanley Hall and George Kerr, who served for six terms each; Cam Jackson, who served for five terms; and my predecessor, Joyce Savoline, a passionate champion of Burlington who arrived here after a distinguished history as chair of Halton region.

Yes, Burlington is a Tory stronghold, but any stronghold still needs to be defended. I was always very clear on that point during the campaign. You owe it to the voters to knock on doors, have the conversation and make the calls. It's community that elevates us to this position, and it's community that gives us purpose.

The day of my swearing-in, a special constable of the Legislature told me, "This is your House now, Mrs. McKenna." It was a heartfelt statement that meant a lot to me. But the more I thought about it, the more it seemed incomplete, because this is also our House, the House of all the people of Ontario.

As important as constituents are, I'd be lying if I said they were always top of mind, because in all honesty for me family is first and foremost. I get my self-worth when I look in my children's eyes, and I know, at the end of the day when I pass on, that no one will love me as much as my husband has, and that's all that matters to me. Any success I'm able to achieve is directly linked to that secure and firm foundation. I am blessed with five fantastic kids, a loving husband, a wonderful son-in-law and a gorgeous grandson.

My role, my title of MPP, is something that I take very seriously and a badge I wear with great honour. I am deeply thankful to my constituents for their vote of confidence. The community of Burlington has entrusted me to serve as their voice at Queen's Park, and I look forward to working for progressive outcomes on the city's behalf.

It will be a key priority for me to make sure that commitments related to the long-overdue expansion of Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital are honoured and that this project continues to move forward for the benefit of Burlingtonians.

To all the people of Burlington, allow me to say once again that I will never take this seat for granted. I will be your advocate and represent you with passion and distinction, listening intently, working hard, speaking out on your behalf and delivering the results that matter most to you, so that our community remains the greatest in Ontario. Thank you for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I thought the inaugural speech from the member from Burlington might be a little longer. But thank you very much. I appreciate it, and I'm glad she got the opportunity to speak.

I'm honoured to rise today to speak to the motion for interim supply.

If passed, this motion would give the government the necessary interim spending authority to finance required expenditures at the beginning of the 2012-13 fiscal year.

Interim supply gives the government the interim spending authority to finance the programs it has set out, fulfill its commitments and put its vision into practice.

Interim or temporary spending authority is required from the beginning of the fiscal year until the Legislature reviews government expenditures and approves them in the Supply Act. Interim supply motions can provide temporary spending authority for up to six months, so this motion covers the period from April 1, 2012, through September 30, 2012.

This motion would give government the authority to make payments for all government ministries and offices, as well as legislative offices. Without spending authority, government payments, such as payments to nursing homes, hospitals, doctors, schools, municipalities, financial and income-support recipients, people with disabilities and special needs, children's aid societies and those who rely on various benefit programs, such as the Ontario Child Benefit and the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, cannot be made.

I would like to point out that this motion is not to authorize additional expenditures. All expenditures incurred under the authority of this motion would be charged to voted appropriations per the 2012-13 expenditure estimates. The maximum of amount of expenditures under the interim supply motion would be set out and authorized by the Supply Act.

When we complete this debate, I'm going to urge all members of the House to support this motion because without its necessary spending, the government will be unable to provide the public services that the people of Ontario count on.

I want to also talk about the fact that we, as a government, remain very much committed to prudently managing Ontario's finances. We will eliminate the deficit in 2017-18. We have to look at ways to ensure that we are providing government in a most responsible fashion while also reducing expenditures. The Don Drummond commission includes recommendations on continuing to reduce spending and improve service delivery.

Our strong record of fiscal management has resulted in eliminating the $5.6-billion deficit that we inherited and, after that, in posting three consecutive balanced budgets. Obviously the recession had a huge impact on our economy, and it has resulted in deficits, again, because of the stimulus spending that the government undertook, not only here in Ontario but across the country and, in fact, around the globe.

That spending, Speaker, was important not only to stimulate the economy, to create the necessary jobs, but also through that stimulus, we chose to lessen the impact on Ontarians and protect jobs, health care and education. Returning to balance by reforming government service delivery while protecting education and health care is the number one priority for our government.

In the alternative, we may be looking at arbitrary, across-the-board reductions which would require deep cuts to education and health care and hurt Ontario families, something that our government is not committed to doing.

We will continue to find efficiencies within the government. We've already done so, finding savings of nearly $1.5 billion across the government over the next three years. Major agencies have to deliver savings of $200 million by 2013-14.

We've reduced funding for executive offices of transfer payment recipients and agencies by 10%, not to mention we are taking steps and have taken steps in order to reduce the size of the Ontario public service by an additional 1,500 positions, on top of the 3,400 positions announced in the 2009 budget—in addition, eliminating 14 agencies, including Infrastructure Ontario and the Ontario Realty Corp., saving over $5 million per year.

One of the things that we undertook which was opposed by the opposition party was to reduce the price of generic drugs by 50%, something that we've been successful in doing. The result is that we have found savings of $500 million as a result of those reforms. That money is being invested back into our health care system, not to mention cheaper drugs for families across the province.

We've also committed to reducing travel expenses. In fact, we have reduced it by $30 million, or 24%, last year, and $10 million more will be saved this year.

Reducing consulting expenditures over 50% since we took government has been another initiative of our government in terms of expenditure management.

Speaker, it's interesting to note that Ontario has the third-lowest program spending per capita in Canada, and per capita spending on government services is second-lowest of all provinces. In fact, Mr. Drummond, in his report, stated the following: "Yet spending is neither out of control nor wildly excessive. Ontario runs one of the lowest-cost provincial governments in Canada relative to its GDP and has done so for decades. And we must recognize that some important steps have been taken in the past few years to help manage costs, improve our prospects for future economic growth and enhance services to the public."

That was something that Mr. Drummond, in his extensive report, outlined in terms of the way money is spent in this province on public services and government public service in general.

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Speaker, I want to spend some time talking about perhaps two very important initiatives which are going to result in both strengthening our economy, because that's something we really, really need to focus on at this time, but also ensuring that we are helping a very important particular part of our population.

The first one I will talk about is the healthy homes renovation tax credit. Once passed by this Legislature—which I really hope; it has passed through second reading and will be moving on to committee soon—it will help ensure that our seniors can continue to live at their homes as long as they want. That's a very important thing because our population is aging. The baby boomers are becoming seniors, and it is incumbent that we find ways to keep them at home as long as possible. The longer

they're home, there are a couple of things that will happen. First, they'll continue to live with independence and dignity, because that's where they're most comfortable, at their own home; and secondly, it's a cost saving for the government, because to put that senior in a long-term-care facility or in a hospital is an expensive proposition. It is most likely detrimental to their health when they actually can't live at home, but also expensive for the government.

Through the healthy homes renovation credit, if it is passed, seniors will have the opportunity, even more so, to renovate, to update their home so they can make it more accessible. It's a credit of up to $1,500 per year, if they spend up to $10,000, to put handrails at home, build ramps to make their homes more wheelchair accessible, put lift chairs in, for example, or make their washrooms more accessible. These kind of things will make it much easier for a lot of seniors to continue to live at home.

Here's another great benefit of that initiative, and that is the jobs it will create in our economy when it comes to the construction, the renovation sector. In fact, it is estimated that 10,500 jobs per year will be created as a result of this tax credit.

So it's an important step that on the one hand we are looking after our seniors, we are making sure that our seniors continue to at home, that they continue to live in dignity, that we provide the necessary services that they need at home, like doctors visiting or nurses visiting them at home or personal support workers coming to the home, as opposed to them getting those services in a long-term-care facility or in a nursing home. And they live with independence: Every senior that I have spoken to in my community of Ottawa Centre, that is something they want. They want to live in their homes as long as possible.

But there is a positive benefit to the economy as well because it will create jobs, which is very important as we go through these perilous economic times.

The other initiative, Speaker, that I want to talk about is the 30% reduction we have brought in post-secondary student fees both for universities and colleges. We know that education is absolutely key to grow a 21st-century economy, that one of the best assets we have in Ontario is its people. That skill set, that human resource, is going to ensure that we as an economy continue to grow, so we need to invest in our students from day one. That is why the full-day kindergarten program is so important, because it gives the kind of right start kids of all backgrounds need, coming from all parts of the province, no matter if they're rich or poor or if they're new to Canada or come from different ethnic or religious backgrounds. They get a great start through the full-day kindergarten program, making them more successful as they go into grade one and beyond.

Secondly, we have made tremendous advancement in our education system, to a point that we're becoming the envy of the world. We are ranked an education system which is in the top 10 in the world. It has been recognized through all kinds of international ranking. Most recently the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the OECD, through its PISA testing, ranked Ontario in the top 10 in the world. McKinsey and Co. ranked it in the top five in the world, in the same category as Finland, Singapore and South Korea—

Mr. Jeff Leal: President Obama's education secretary is looking—

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: President Obama's education secretary is looking at the Ontario system and how we are doing things, where our graduation rates are going up, our class sizes are down and we're narrowing the gap between students who had challenges in the past and those who succeed, by making sure that our students are doing better and better. That is putting in a foundation for us to grow in the future.

Hence the third part that of equation in order to develop that critical human skill, the great asset of ours in this province; that is, to invest in post-secondary education, to invest in our universities and our colleges so that our students can get the best education. Now, part of that exercise is to make sure that education remains accessible and affordable. That is why one of the commitments we, as the Liberal Party, made in the last election was to reduce tuition fees for low- and mid-income families—anywhere up to $160,000 or less—by 30%. Starting January 1, we brought in that measure so that we could reduce tuition fees. It's really an effective tool, because it's going to make sure that students can get a quality university or college education at an affordable price.

I want to do a plug here: Those students who are not on OSAP will not be automatically considered, so they have to go online and apply. The deadline is March 31. So if you have not been online yet to apply for the 30%-off grant, please do so. I believe you can just go to ontario.ca/30off, or you can go to the Facebook website, facebook.com/30off, and can get the information and apply online. I really encourage that. I encourage all the students who are in my riding, whether they go to Carleton University, which is located in Ottawa Centre, or the University of Ottawa, which is next door, or Algonquin College and La Cité collégiale.

All these things are extremely important to grow the 21st-century economy. We cannot continue to do things the way they were done in the past. That is just a non-starter. We've come a long way. The global economy has changed. When I hear ideas from the opposition parties that are a throwback from the past, this talk about how things were great in the past—they may have been, no doubt about it. But things have changed. We cannot just continue to do what we did 20 or 30 years ago or even perhaps in the last decade, to be successful today.

We need to continue to improve, and the best way to do it is to invest in our education system—I mean it—and that has got to start from day one when a child is born, by making sure there is quality child care, by making sure that the full-day kindergarten program is there for every single four- and five-year-old across the province, by making sure that grade 1 to grade 12 students are getting quality public education in our public

schools and, of course, ensuring that we have the best universities and colleges in the world. That is the kind of investment we need to make that will help Ontario to grow, and not only will it help us to manage our challenges today, the fiscal challenges that we are very much committed to tackling and eliminating the deficit by 2017-18, but also, most importantly, to grow the economy, to create the new, modern, value-added, high-tech 21st-century jobs that this province very much needs.

Speaker, at this point I will urge all members to please vote in favour of this interim supply motion. It is extremely important. We need to make sure that this motion is passed so that we can continue to pay all our great service providers who provide valued public services to all Ontarians across the province, because it's on their shoulders that we stand and enjoy such a great quality of life. Thank you very much.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to join the debate on the interim supply motion.

I listened carefully, first, to the member for Burlington, and I want to congratulate her on her maiden speech today. I know that's always a big day in this Legislature when you get to do your maiden speech. Also, it's a day that you look forward to getting here, but you're glad when it's over too, because you've had lots of thinking and worrying: "Should I do this and should I have that?" You have, of course, a limited time. But I think the member for Burlington covered all the bases, and certainly we're proud to have her as a member of the PC caucus here under Tim Hudak, our leader. She talked about only four members in the last 60-something years in Burlington—

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Sixty-eight.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Sixty-eight years. I expect that she's going to be here representing Burlington for some time to come as well, and in the tremendously capable fashion that she's already shown thus far. So congratulations to the member for Burlington.

I say that with respect to all of the new elected members here in the House. There are 16 new Progressive Conservatives, nine new members of the third party and six new members of the governing party, and I congratulate them all on their being elected to this House. I'm sure that each and every one of them we'll hear from more and more as time goes on.

Now I'm going to talk a little bit about the interim supply motion and particularly the words that we heard from the member from Ottawa Centre, who came rushing in here—I thought maybe it was going to be like the sermon from the mount, that he had something rather important to say. But it was pretty innocuous stuff. It was the same old, same old stuff that we've been hearing from Liberals for months, trying to dodge and deflect the issues of the day and give the impression that they're good stewards of the government and good stewards of the economy and the finances.

Speaker, we're going to pass this interim supply motion because, of course, we want to ensure that the wheels of government don't grind to a halt, even though we have mixed feelings on it because in the real world, if someone managed their affairs in the way that this government manages theirs—I say this to the Premier and to the Minister of Finance, because they're the ones asking for this interim supply motion—one of two things would likely be happening: Someone would be appointed as a public guardian to run their affairs or someone would apply for and receive power of attorney to ensure that that person didn't do damage to themselves because of the irresponsible way that they managed their own affairs.

In this province, there's little we can do at this point, save and except for the next election, and I'm sure that when that time comes the people of the province of Ontario are going to send a very, very clear message to the sitting Liberals that, "We weakened you badly in the last election but, look, we're taking you out in this one. It's time for you to go."

Mr. Phil McNeely: Oh, you've been saying that for years.

Mr. John Yakabuski: One of these days I'm going to be right, I say to the member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Let's just look at some of the things that the member talked about. Actually, let's touch on something that the member from Ottawa Centre didn't talk about, but everybody has been talking about it since we came back here. You may have talked about it yourself, Speaker: the scandal enveloping the McGuinty government and the Minister of Health going on at Ornge. No disclosure of what's happening; dodging and deflecting the questions—the very, very good questions—from the member from Newmarket–Aurora and the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who have repeatedly raised the issue—and, of course, our leader, Tim Hudak, as well, the Leader of the Opposition—trying to get some answers as to what happened to bring this kind of mess at the provincially operated air ambulance system.

This scandal may be larger than eHealth. Some of the members are shaking their heads, and it's because they're saying, "Oh, no, eHealth was bigger. We were proud of that one too," but they shouldn't be proud of eHealth. You shouldn't be—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to the member from Ancaster, you shouldn't be proud of eHealth. You shouldn't be proud of eHealth. It was a scandal of massive proportions, but you may have outdone yourselves with this Ornge scandal. What you should do is just put your heads down and try not to be seen, because this is something that's going to—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —each and every one of you. The failure of the Minister of Health to deal with the scandal at Ornge is going to bring down every one of

them. The people in this province are not going to forget the irresponsible way that you've handled this mess.

Twenty-five million dollars is actually totally unaccounted for: $25 million. So, what does the Premier want to talk about? Oh, he wants to talk—oh, here's another one, Mr. Speaker. He wants to talk about subsidies.

The Premier likes to call revenue-sharing agreements subsidies. But if I say to the folks in the news department up there, in the gallery—you know, if you sign a contract with the Toronto Star and you're delivering their newspapers and you say, "Well, look, I'll deliver your newspapers but I want 10 or 12 cents per newspaper," and then you start getting paid that and you look after the distribution of the newspapers, is that a subsidy or is that a revenue-sharing agreement that you've signed with them to do a certain job?

The Premier now wants to call a revenue-sharing agreement with the slots in Ontario racetracks a subsidy. You want to talk about what a subsidy is? A subsidy is when you pay an inflated price for something to actually bring it onboard and play it way above the market value because you want to ensure that it gets there; because you know that if it had to fight, sink or swim on its own merits, it wouldn't be there.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There seems to be a lot of noise coming from that side of the House. I'd appreciate it if—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I can't hear the speaker, so I'd like to tone it down a bit, please, and maybe if you want to make any comments, you're in your own seat. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to be careful when you stand because, as you see, I've cleared a bit of a way here. I've moved my chair out of the way, and in my haste to abide by your orders when you stood up, I went to—well, you know what could happen there, Mr. Speaker, so I have to be very, very careful.

So now we're talking about what a subsidy is. We all understand: That's when you pay far in excess of the value of something just to see it happen.

We've got a program here in the province of Ontario that is being subsidized to the tune of billions of dollars a year.

Interjection: Billions?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Billions. As Dr. Carl Sagan would have said, "Billions and billions." Not millions, billions. Billions of dollars a year: subsidies for their failed green energy programs, their failed energy experiments.

Now we've got a situation with that subsidy where we take this power that we produce, but don't need, at these gigantic industrial wind farms. Okay? We actually pay Quebec to take the power at times of low demand because the agreements the McGuinty government has signed with these people are that we'll take that power whether we need it or not, whether we've got a place for it. As you know, the electricity system has to balance out. There has to be as much demand as there is produced. There's no place to put it. So you've got to sell it, give it away or actually pay Quebec.

You ought to think of the unbelievable irony of that: paying the province of Quebec, which has the most massive hydraulic capabilities in any power system in North America, and they produce power at pennies per kilowatt hour, but they actually take our power that we're subsidizing at the rate of 13.5 cents per kilowatt hour—and that's just the price of the power. They're taking it from us and getting paid to do so because we're producing in excess at times of low demand because the McGuinty government has pretty well knocked out the manufacturing sector in this province.

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So Quebec then gets paid to take it at night, when the demand is low, so they use that expensive power that they're actually getting paid to take and we are paying to subsidize the industrial wind farms here in the province of Ontario, and then when their demand goes up during the daytime, they release the water that they can store at their massive hydroelectric dams and Quebec gets power at a couple of cents a kilowatt hour.

It's a wonderful, wonderful system for the people of the province of Quebec; not so good for the people of the province of Ontario. Those are the kinds of subsidies that are being paid—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They call that the global adjustment. Well, I'll tell you what: In the old days, these folks over here would have received an attitude adjustment, because that's exactly what needs to happen here, Mr. Speaker.

The kind of insanity that is going on in the back rooms where these decisions are made—and it goes back. I know we don't want to speak ill of the dead, but I've got to talk about George Smitherman. This was the architect of the Green Energy Act. He's gone from this place now, and even the Minister of Health wants to pretend she never knew him. But these were the things that George Smitherman left us with before he left: the Green Energy Act and the FIT program; the FIT program, which is the most massive subsidy in the history of Canada. We are paying that out so that Quebeckers can get free power—Quebeckers, who have the cheapest power in all of North America. The cheapest power available is in Quebec because it's a massive hydraulic system that has the cheapest cost per kilowatt hour. Not only are we paying the most expensive, with the exception of Prince Edward Island, but we are giving it to the province that produces power at the cheapest rate. That's what you call a subsidy. When Premier McGuinty wants to talk about a subsidy, he needs to look no farther than his Green Energy Act that he and George Smitherman cooked up over some sushi one day.

I don't think I'm going to talk a whole lot longer, because I know we've got other members of the caucus

too, but I could talk on a lot of things. The member talked about the 30% tuition cut. We all know that even the student unions are just livid about that, because it is the most misdirected, ill-conceived program you could ever think of trying to help students. Mr. Speaker, if you're a student and you're 22 years old, or you're a single mother and you'd like to go back to school to get some upgrades, would you think that you might be in a financial need situation? Yeah, you might be, but you don't qualify under the Liberal program. No.

You see, everything they've done for eight years has been done, "How can we get a political win out of this?" That's the thing that gets me. They have stopped caring about what is good for Ontario or the people who live here. The only thing they look at in the future is, "What can we do, in a piecemeal way, to knock off, one by one, those little dominoes that may get us elected in the next election?" On one day, it's going to be the seniors with the healthy homes tax credit, another joke of a program; another day, it will be the tuition cut of 30% for a selected group of students. It's political dominoes, is what it is. One by one, they want to knock them down, and hopefully they can win another election.

The sad part is that if this government finds a way to hornswoggle the people once more, I'm worried about what might be left of the province of Ontario. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before debate continues, I'd like to introduce a long-time friend of mine, Ken Chartrand from Stoney Creek, in the west members' gallery.

Further debate? The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, you have friends. I'm impressed. That has got to be a hard cross to bear, I must say. Just joking, Speaker. You're a good friend of mine and I know I'm your friend. We're in the same caucus.

I want to just put a couple of things on the record. A wonderful thing, Mr. Speaker, today—we're having a supply debate. Like a budget debate or like a debate around the throne speech, it gives us the ability to speak on different issues, so I'm going to raise two or three issues—and I warn you now: They're going to be somewhat not connected. But it's a supply bill, so I'm allowed to do that. I just want to go through it.

The first thing I want to talk about is an initiative that my good friend Mr. John Vanthof, myself, Mike Mantha and Madame Gélinas were very involved with, along with Sarah Campbell, from northern Ontario: the condition of northern highways. Mr. Speaker, this year—I know that it's the case with the other northern members—we have never received more complaints in any other year in the past when it comes to the condition of our highways.

The government, in questions in the House last December, said, "Oh, it's because of winter. It's because winter has arrived and that's why the highways are in a bad condition." Mr. Speaker, I've been living in northern Ontario all my life, along with my colleagues, and we have never had a situation where we've seen highways in the condition that they were this December and this January: highway closures almost on a weekly basis. If you had six inches of snowfall on Highway 11 or Highway 144 or 655 or Highway 17 or wherever it might be, you were seeing road closures. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we saw accidents where people died as a result of the condition of our roads. So I want to give some credit to my good friend Mr. Vanthof, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who said, "Listen, we've got to do something about this," along with my other northern colleagues. Mr. Vanthof had the great idea of creating what we call the northern road report. As a result of the northern road report, we had people from across northern Ontario—as we still do, when they see a condition on the highway—reporting it by way of that email, so that members like myself and Madame Gélinas and Monsieur Vanthof and others were able to meet with the Ministry of Transportation in order to raise those specific concerns so as to bring to the attention of the Ministry of Transportation the problem that we were having with our roads.

Mr. Speaker, I want to claim that we got a little bit of success. We haven't fixed the problem—and I'll explain the problem in a minute—but I can tell you that there have been some improvements, because as a result of some meetings that we had with the Ministry of Transportation, contractors have said—and they've been pretty categorical about this—that they had put some extra plows on the road. Hopefully, we should start seeing a difference. I would argue that road conditions are not what they used to be, but they're certainly better than they were when we started in December. It goes to show that when people got involved in the process, they sent the emails, we were able to meet with the Ministry of Transportation, and we were able to put forward suggestions as to how we move forward to fix the roads.

I want to give MTO some credit where credit is due. The northern regional manager that we met with—

Interjection: Mr. Doidge.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Doidge, Eric Doidge, who is the northern regional manager, was very responsive in getting back to Mr. Vanthof and myself and Mr. Mantha, and Madame Gélinas, I believe, as well, in order to try to respond to the concerns that we raised. He made his staff available to us; I want to thank him publicly for that. As a result, there has been some improvement in highway conditions.

But I want to say: Let's not sit on our laurels, Mr. Speaker. It is yet to be seen if we're out of the woods, because the issue is, there has been a change to the performance-based contracts. The new performance-based contract essentially has changed the route times which contractors have to be able to plow our highways, and as a result of that, it has meant less time on the road, which means less equipment, and that is essentially why we got the problem that we did.

We want to thank the ministry. There has been some improvement. We haven't fixed the problem yet—I want

to be clear about that—but there has been some response from the ministry, and we want to thank them.

Also, the minister, I want to say—Mr. Chiarelli—has talked to a number of us individually, and we've been trying collectively, but trying to schedule meetings around this place at times can be very difficult, because we all are very busy. But I know that the minister has been wanting to meet and certainly has discussed this individually with us and has had some concerns. So I want to say to the minister that it's helpful.

But you're not off the hook, Mr. Minister. We still have a problem, and what I hope to see is the result at the end of this year of comparing the amount of highway closures and the amount of accidents that we've had on our highways to the numbers in years before, and I think it's going to demonstrate, quite frankly, that we still have a problem.

The challenge will be: How do we change the performance-based contracts next year so that in fact we're able to maintain the level of—what's the word I'm looking for?—the level of safety and maintenance on our highways that we've had in the past? So yes, there's been a positive response, but I don't think we're out of the woods yet, and I just want to put for the record that it was helpful that the ministry and the minister tried to respond in the way that they did. We did have some progress, but we still have a ways to go.

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On the other side of it, I just want to raise another issue where I think the provincial and federal governments have fallen down entirely—on this, I'll be very critical—and that's the question of OxyContin. I, along with Sarah Campbell and Mr. Gravelle, represent communities that are landlocked. They're communities where there's no road to get in; the only way into those places, by winter or by summer, is to get on an airplane and fly in and fly out. We all know that there is a serious problem of addiction in those communities. Sometimes it's alcohol; sometimes it's drugs. And unfortunately, one of the drugs of choice over the years has been OxyContin.

I was just meeting yesterday with Elijah Moonias, who's the chief of Marten Falls, and I asked him the question, point blank. I said, "Chief, in your community, when the tap runs out for this particular drug, what's going to happen?" And I don't want to repeat what he said, because it's pretty depressing.

We have a crisis that's brewing in those communities. There are people who will be coming off OxyContin and they have nowhere to go. You know—I am looking at the member across the way; I'm sorry I forget your name, but I know you understand this issue—the problem is that turning off the tap doesn't necessarily break the addiction. It certainly takes them away from the drugs, but it creates a whole other set of problems, and there isn't the support mechanism in our communities to ensure that we have the professionals in the community to deal with those people who are coming off the drug and are experiencing the awful experiences—I'm trying not to use the kind of language that I'd like to use, because it's Parliament. But it's going to be hell in those communities.

In some communities, the number of people on OxyContin is quite high. The percentages are a lot higher than people realize, and it's going to create a real problem inside those communities. It's going to be a problem for those who are coming off the drug. It's going to be a problem for those people who are living in the same houses as those people who are off the drugs, because remember, we're talking about communities where 20 people live in one house. If you've got one, two or three people coming off the drug at the same time, imagine what that's going to mean to the other people living there. Grandmother, grandfather, brother, sister, husband, wife or children are going to be affected by what goes on in those houses.

I'm just pleading to both the federal and the provincial governments: We need to put in place a strategy that properly supports those communities so that we can deal with people as they get off the drugs. There are things that we can do. We all understand, on all sides of the House, that it's difficult to accomplish these things, but I tell you, my friends, it's going to be hell in those communities. When I heard what Eli and others have told me yesterday—I'm just going to leave it at that.

I see the minister is acknowledging this in debate, and I appreciate that. I hope we're able to find a way forward to ensure that those communities and those people who are going to be coming off of these particular addictive drugs have the support mechanisms to get them there.

While I'm on it, I just—because I just finished meeting with the people from Heart and Stroke. There has been some real progress in a lot of our communities—not only in First Nations communities, but across Ontario—to get people to understand that a healthier way of life is the way, quite frankly, that we need to go, both from a personal perspective, as far as our own lives and wanting to live longer and have healthier lives, but also for our health care systems.

The challenge in the First Nations communities is that the challenge is this high, where it's comparatively this high in other communities. Why? They're isolated communities. There aren't the types of facilities for people to go work out, like we have in our communities. We all have gyms. We have running tracks. We've got equipment. We have all of the things that we need in order to help us live a healthier lifestyle. In communities like Attawapiskat or Kashechewan or Peawanuck or wherever it might be, you don't have those kinds of facilities.

So as we talk about living healthier lifestyles, I think we need to figure out, from our perspective, both federal and provincial governments—although health is now a provincial responsibility on reserve; it is no longer a federal responsibility, except for a couple of communities. As we talk about health promotion, we need to put in place for those First Nations communities a way for people to actually choose things that will allow them to be able to live that healthier lifestyle and eventually get

to the way of recovery and the way of better health than what is going on now. So I just say to the minister, while she's here, that she has to look at that.

I know my colleague—she wants how much more time? Because I'm about—

M^me^ France Gélinas: Whatever you want.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Okay, very good. I'm just checking. We're very democratic on this side of the House. We work these things out as we're speaking.

I just want to raise another issue entirely, and that is on the issue of mining. I told you all of these things were going to be somewhat disconnected.

We have a huge opportunity in northern Ontario right now. We are seeing a boom in places like Sudbury, Kirkland Lake, Timmins, Red Lake and Matachewan, where mining is playing an amazing role to our communities.

Mind you, I want to remind people, there are many communities in northern Ontario that don't have the benefit of having the geology or the mines in their backyards that create the kind of employment we see in Sudbury or Timmins or Kirkland Lake. Probably 80% or 90% of them don't have that benefit.

But mining is going to provide, as it has in the past, a huge opportunity, not only for people in northern Ontario to get employment, both First Nations and non-First Nations, but it's also going to be an opportunity to do what Ontario has always been good at, and that is to look at how we manage our natural resources in a way that we can most get the benefit here in Ontario to build a stronger economy.

The city of Toronto, people forget, was built on mining. Mining and forestry were what sustained the financial institutions in the city of Toronto. The TSX that we now take for granted as one of the most effective and one of the world leaders when it comes to a stock exchange for the commodities market was built on mining and forestry. So what's good for northern Ontario is going to be extremely good for downtown Toronto, because at the end, it is the money from those natural resources that, quite frankly, sustains many of the jobs that we have here in downtown Toronto.

We have a place called the Ring of Fire. I remember I heard it mentioned a couple of budgets ago, where the government said, "Here's a great opportunity." And I agree with the government and their statement they did in the budget two years ago. But little has happened over the last two years to do the groundwork that needs to be done to ensure that all Ontario benefits from the Ring of Fire.

There is going to be a minimum of three mines running there in the next six to seven years. You're going to have probably Noront for sure; it will be the first one up, running a nickel mine. You'll have Cliffs Resources, and Noront shortly after, running chromite mines, and there are others that are there.

It is a prolific area when it comes to the geology and the ability to build mines there. You're talking about ore bodies that are richer than we've seen in a whole bunch of other places in the world. It's almost like the Porcupine camp and Sudbury put together, times two. That's how rich this whole thing is. But we've done little in this province in order to figure out how we can benefit as much as possible as a result of what happens in those mines.

Let me just be very specific. One is the First Nations component. If we're going to have development in those communities—and we are going to have development in those areas—we need to get right how we deal with First Nations, so that First Nations become real partners in the development of these operations, and not only real partners from the perspective of getting a job, but real partners when it comes to the ability to start businesses and do the economic development that they need in their communities to build the communities that we have in places like Timmins or Sudbury or Toronto.

When you're living in Marten Falls or you're living in Attawapiskat, it is a bit of a stretch, in this current environment, to have the confidence in thinking that those mines are going to benefit you to the degree that you do, because without government involvement in making sure the right things happen, you're not going to get the maximum benefit.

The first thing I would say is, we need to move forward by making sure that we have in place good policy with regard to what the responsibility of the mining and exploration community is when it comes to those particular developments, and what the responsibility of the federal and provincial government is in regard to making sure that First Nations are not only able to get jobs but are able to benefit from the economic activities in their own territories.

The other part is, I very much fear—and I say today in the House, on March 7—that, left alone, chromite will not be processed in Ontario under the current system. It is pretty clear in my mind, as I look at where things are going in the Ring of Fire, we're going to be mining what is essentially called lumpy ore, shipping it to British Columbia and putting it on boats and sending it to China for processing. I think, "What a stupid thing to do." Why don't we, as a province, position ourselves so that we can maximize those jobs created not only from mining but the value-added jobs that come after by way of refining and smelting? We've seen in Timmins, we've seen in Sudbury, the benefit that brings to not only our communities but the benefit it brings to all of Ontario.

I think that what we need to do—we need to do two things. We have to have a carrot and we have to have a stick approach. We have to say to the mining companies, "Listen, let us help you make those investments by being at the table to talk about the development of infrastructure to the Ring of Fire." I'm not talking about building the mine, but the road or the rail that's got to get there; the power developments that have to happen; the training that has to happen in order to support those industries, in order to make sure that they have the workforce to be able to deploy in those particular projects—all of the ancillary issues when it comes to

infrastructure development of the mine. Then we say to the companies, "We're prepared to do that, but here's the quid pro quo: You will have to refine and smelt in this province; otherwise, we'll prevent you by way of a stick," and that is amending the Mining Act, saying that you can't move ore out of this province unless it's processed here in the province or we give you permission.

1640

I think most mining companies—I know in the case of Noront, I've had these discussions with them. My colleagues and I actually went to the Cowper Lake site to visit both the Noront site and the Cliffs resources site. I know, at least from the conversations that I've had with the mining companies, they're prepared to invest in Ontario if the conditions are right: if they have power rates that make sense; if they have the training they need to get the workforce that runs those mines; if we're able to help with the infrastructure to get to the place. For example, if I build an auto plant in Windsor, I'll build highways to it; I'll bring services to the property. We should be doing the same, I believe, when it comes to those mines. I think if we do this right, we will not only see those mines go into production, but we will also see the value-added smelting and refining opportunities that come from that and everything else after.

I know that our colleague Mr. Mantha is working hard as our critic on a policy that we'll be announcing in the not-too-distant future about how we deal with the Ring of Fire and how we deal with mining generally in this province. I think there's a huge opportunity here that we can't let go.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I know my collègue, la membre de Nickel Belt, a une couple d'affaires qu'elle veut dire sur ce débat, et je remercie les membres de l'Assemblée d'avoir écouté mon débat. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to speak on this supply motion this afternoon and to bring to the attention of the members attending and listening here this afternoon some issues that affect my riding. I'll try not to be overtly political, but I will make a fair commentary on issues that are important to my constituents. They range from current issues of legislation that are before us—I'm just reading an article in the clippings here on Bill 13. This is by Moira Macdonald, on education, from this morning: "Stop the Bullying." That's an issue that's not getting a lot of attention in the riding, in fairness. I think some of the leaders in the community are sort of avoiding talking about the issue, which isn't helpful.

I want to start by saying that in the real, practical sense, I agree with, for instance, the private member's bill that our leader, Tim Hudak, introduced earlier this afternoon, re-examining the whole feed-in tariff and renewable energy policy that the current government has basically screwed up in terms of—that may not be the right choice of words. But when you look at the charges for the dispatch price and the market price that they're guaranteeing, all this money, the revenue for it, is made up from other charges that are put on people's bills, and I think it's just not acceptable. You see it in businesses in my riding. In fact, that's one of the key things. If you look as far back as Sir Adam Beck, the policy at that time was energy at cost, and what he meant was energy at any cost. In fact, he built the manufacturing sector based on having safe, reliable, affordable energy. That's exactly what Tim's bill is trying to do: It's trying to relate, as was said in question period today, that there's a reciprocal relationship between the cost of energy and jobs. So if the cost of energy is up, then the loss in jobs is up. Do you understand? It's sort of an inverse relationship, I guess you'd say. That's where we are today.

In fact, one of my constituents on that file who is very well qualified—if I could be so bold as to mention his name: Michael Patrick. He's an electrical engineer, I believe, and an MBA. At one time, he worked for the Ministry of Economic Development, I believe. He is the owner of Bowmanville Foundry. The foundry is where they make metal parts. They have an electric arc furnace, and so their electricity bill is about $100,000 a month. Half of that bill is this new charge that is the global adjustment.

There was a question asked by our member from Nipissing, Mr. Fedeli, our critic. I thought it was an excellent question. Most members don't get it, but the global adjustment is collecting around $800 million a year—and it's going to soon be $8 billion a year—from business.

There's an employer in my community with about 100 employees, roughly. He has done everything to make his operation effective, efficient, and yet the more efficiency he spends money on, the more he pays in this global adjustment, which is really part of the feed-in-tariff discussion, which is the high rates of electricity—in a range of 80 cents for microFIT solar to something in the order of 15 cents per kilowatt hour for other renewables like wind.

The real issue here is that we're paying them 80 cents. If you can figure this business model out, Mr. Speaker, we're paying 80 cents for solar and selling it for under 10 cents.

More problematic is the question of, when you look at the system, the baseload is nuclear, of course—and I'm proud to have the Darlington nuclear plant in my riding, and the Pickering plant is in Durham region as well. The baseload is about 50% nuclear, and then there's hydroelectric and then there's gas.

Coal plants, in fairness—I want to make this very clear. I'm happy to see Elizabeth Witmer from Kitchener here. When she was the minister, she was the one who announced the closure of the Lakeview plant. In fact, I was there. That is the only coal plant that's been closed. Who closed it? Elizabeth Witmer.

You'd remember this, Mr. Speaker: They promised in the 2003 election, the McGuinty—I don't know how to get around it; I can't use the word "lied." They promised to close the coal plants. Now I'm going to put it on the table: Did they keep their word? They haven't. They're

not closed. In fact, the truth is, they're not going to close them at all.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Yes, we will.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. What they're going to do is burn biomass. What's biomass? It's wood. What is wood? Wood is carbon. The only difference is it's not coal; it's carbon. Wood is carbon. It's a carbon sink, actually.

They have not got anything right on this file at all.

Bringing it back to my business, my constituent is in the situation where he may have to move to the United States, not just because of the dollar problem, but because of the cost of energy.

Look at northern Ontario. The plight in northern Ontario is all costs—the pulp and paper industry was the lifeblood of northern communities, the wood fibre industry. What was the major cost of input for that business? The business cost was the price of energy. Now, the price of energy, when they had unmanaged hydroelectric dams that should have been built in northern Ontario and used to offset—and some of the companies did build dams, and yet they're going to be charged these global adjustments that I referred to, as well. It's just tragic.

If I share with the consumers, especially the seniors who might be listening today—please open up your electricity bill and look at all the charges on there. You'll find about 40% of the total bill of $100—probably about $40 will be the actual electricity or electrons that you used. The rest is all these McGuinty charges. It's just unacceptable. That's just one file that is totally fouled up—totally fouled up. I don't want to go on anymore on that one.

I look at my riding: What's the infrastructure we need? They promised, Mr. Speaker—another promise to build the 407 to 35/115. In fact, I have a signed document from Greg Sorbara, who was then the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Finance federally saying it would be built. There was an agreement about the York-Spadina subway extension, how the money would flow.

1650

You know something, Mr. Speaker? They have obfuscated or skated around the real truth. Highway 407 is not going to be built. I put on the table here that I have lost complete confidence in the McGuinty government. I don't like it when they don't deliver on their promises—none of them.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it's dreadful. I mean significant promises.

Now, it was 2003 when they promised it. They promised it again in 2007, and they promised it in 2011. I put to you today that I suspect that they're going to further delay the 407 east expansion in this budget.

Don't promise things you can't deliver. It's like telling your children you're going to get them a pony. You've seen that advertisement on television for the bank. That's what the guy did: "Oh, would you like a pony?" And he gave them a little plastic pony. Honest to God. The other ad that reminds me of is "hand in your pocket." The HST: He said, "I promise I won't raise your taxes." He has raised taxes almost to the stratosphere. There's that old expression, "Fool me once," but I don't want to use it because I'll probably screw it up. All I'm saying is, there's enough evidence that "trust" becomes an important word in political or public policy discussions.

Just recently, our member Frank Klees has carried the torch on the complete and utter mismanagement of Ornge. Today, they threw George Smitherman under the bus. If you read the article in the paper, they threw him right under the bus. They would blame anybody except take responsibility themselves. That's the most disheartening part of this whole thing. They'll blame Stephen Harper on the transfer payments, when he said he's going to give them 6% per year for the next several years. I can tell you right now that it's disheartening.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you have to be neutral in that chair, but I know you feel roughly the same. I know your passion for your riding. I've heard you speak compassionately in the past.

There's another one here. I was at a meeting this week, on Monday morning actually. I went to a meeting with the leaders in Durham region. The regional chairman and all the mayors were there, and Mr. Bruce McCuaig, who is president and CEO of Metrolinx. Now they've promised to put the GO train to Bowmanville. It's not there. There is not one dollar in the budget. In fact, this was pointed out. It's not been funded; there's no money. Don't promise things you're not prepared to deliver.

Now, here's the conundrum. If you promise something and then find out later you can't afford it, well, you shouldn't have promised it. Why do I say that? Well, you can't promise things unless you've done the due diligence, actually looked at the risk assessment, the business, the finances. That's exactly the dilemma I find us in today on almost everything.

In the very little time I have left, I want to put on the table a very important sector in my riding of Durham, which I'm very proud to serve. It's Uxbridge, a nice, small, prosperous community of just under 20,000 people; a wonderful mayor, Gerri Lynn O'Connor. Then we have Scugog township—really, Port Perry is the major city—another under 20,000, and a wonderful mayor, Chuck Mercier. He's an excellent mayor. The other part, of course, is Clarington, about 80,000 people, and Mayor Adrian Foster.

I work very closely with them. I consider them my key partners to represent them in a non-partisan way, to be truthful. I say to the government, these are the things that are priorities for my constituents. In almost every case, they're disappointed.

They've promised the nuclear plant. Now, they're going to do the refurbishment. I think it was approved last week. The refurbishment is about a 10-year project, really, to refurbish the four reactors. We understand this is an important investment, but if you look back—I started with the energy file—the other nuclear plant is in

Pickering, and they're planning to mothball that plant. I'm putting another thing on the table: That is a mistake. You're going to have a supply problem big time, because renewable energy is not dispatchable. When it's not sunny, there's no sun-powered electricity. When it's not windy, there's no wind power.

But anyway, I have pretty well used as much time as I was permitted to use. There are other people who want to speak and I'm going to stop right now. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Nickel Belt.

M^me^ France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to see you sitting in that chair. It's also my pleasure to add my voice to the interim supply motion that was tabled today.

I will start by making reference back to the Heart and Stroke Foundation people, who are here at Queen's Park today. They have run a very dynamite campaign to really try to change things so that we have better health. Their campaign is called "Better Health is Worth 0.5%."

I guess we all know that Ontario is facing an urgent health care crisis. But as they say, the real tragedy is that it is preventable. Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that 80% of heart disease and stroke and about half of all cancers can be prevented through healthy public policy and lifestyle changes? Think about it, Mr. Speaker: 50% of all cancer. That's one in two who have cancer could be prevented. Some 80% of heart disease, strokes. You know how much hardship is brought upon an individual or a family when somebody has a stroke? Well, 80% of them could be prevented if Ontario had a good health promotion strategy.

We spend close to $47 billion a year treating people once they're already sick, but we spend less than 0.35% of 1% of that trying to keep people healthy. The people at the Heart and Stroke Foundation, and certainly the people on this side of the House and in my party, would like to see that change, and I think we have the opportunity to do this through this interim supply motion that is in front of us.

I was really taken aback when I saw that Ontario, which was one of the first provinces to bring a Ministry of Health Promotion, had actually taken it away. We don't have a Ministry of Health Promotion anymore. We still have some health promotion initiatives, but as I said, they represent a very minute part of what we do in health care: 0.35% of 1% we spend on keeping people healthy. Yet we know that we could have tremendous impact on the people of Ontario, on their quality of life and on the money we spend if we were serious about getting a good, strong, robust health promotion strategy that would put a determinants-of-health lens onto everything that the government does.

To give you an example I can't understand how come in 2012, in my own riding, I see new housing development going on, beautiful new houses being built with all of the new people working at the mines, but you know what, Mr. Speaker? Those new housing developments are built without a sidewalk. Those developments are built in a way that they expect each and every family to hop into the minivan to drive to the soccer field. Why is it that we don't put a determinants-of-health lens? A determinants-of-health lens will tell you that urban planning should be done so that people could walk.

Make the healthy decision the easy decision: If you have a sidewalk in front of your home, chances are that you will go push the stroller down on a nice day. Older people will feel safe to go for a walk. Your kids will walk to the playground, rather than hop into the back of the minivan and be driven over there.

We have to look at our environment as a way to make people healthy rather than relying on the health care system to fix us up once we're already sick. It is too late. It is too late on the hardship that it causes on people, but it is also too late because it's an opportunity lost. A lot of those diseases are preventable, yet we're not working upon them.

1700

Mr. Frank Klees: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. Speaker, I want to inform the House that I have tabled an opposition day motion—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's not a point of order. You know, under regular circumstances you can certainly get that onto the record at a different time. This is not the place for it. Thank you.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you. I did want to let the House know—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you very much.

The member from Nickel Belt.

M^me^ France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, I will take 30 seconds to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora for tabling that important motion. It's a little bit unfortunate that the procedures in this House did not allow him to expand upon it, but it's certainly something important; that is, to create a select committee to get to the bottom of what happened at Ornge.

The hundreds of people that have come to me and that have come to this member have a story to tell. Right now, we know bits and pieces of what happened at Ornge. Actually, we know a little bit more than what we're allowed to share, because a lot of those people that come to me and that come to the member from Newmarket–Aurora come to us and say, "But you can't tell, because if you tell, they'll know that I'm the one who gave you that information because I'm the only one that had access to that information."

Those people want a safe forum to be able to come and share with this House what they know and how come we ended up in the mess that we are now in with Ornge, where a few people got very, very rich in a web of tangled companies that were all surrounding a not-for-

profit agency that we call air ambulance Ontario, Ornge Ontario.

So I certainly commend the member for tabling that motion, and I can assure him that from the New Democrats it will have our full support to move that motion forward.

I also want to talk about another group that is here today. I had the pleasure to talk with Rob Heinman, who is a firefighter from the city of Greater Sudbury. It kind of surprised me to hear about his message. I remember my leader, Andrea Horwath, the member for Hamilton Centre—she was not our leader at the time, but, man, did she bring forward a hell of a campaign to make sure that firefighters had presumptive legislation. That is, we can see that a lot of the firefighters who get sick, most of the time from cancer—we can see that there is a direct link, Mr. Speaker, with the work that they have done. The work that they do made them sick. They work that they do gives them cancer, yet they were not allowed compensation. Although they got sick because of what they did at work, the way the law was structured, those people were not allowed to be compensated.

My leader, Andrea Horwath, fought really hard. She brought in the statistics. We looked at the incidents. We looked at what happened on some of the big fires where a lot of firefighters got sick. And with a lot of hard work and a lot of meetings, we finally got presumptive legislation for firefighters, but they are here today at Queen's Park again asking us to basically come through on the legislation we put forward.

There are still a lot of firefighters who are getting sick, who are getting cancer. When you look at the epidemiology and when you look at the statistics, you can see that their rates of those diseases are way higher than the general population. If you start to take into account that generally speaking, fire suppression firefighters, the active ones—that's a little pun for the guys who do fire inspection. The guys who work in suppression tend to be healthy, but yet, they will have rates of certain cancers that you cannot explain by any other means than the fact that they are firefighters.

They and their association are here today at Queen's Park, advocating for their fellow members who are fighting a fight themselves. They are fighting cancer. There are about 100 firefighters right now in Ontario that have a diagnosis of cancer where we can make the link between the job that they did protecting ourselves and our property and the disease that they got, but yet to this day the government refuses to recognize that this is a disease they got on the job and they should get compensation for that. So they are here today asking for her support, and I hope we will give it to them.

Regarding interim supply, we know that the Ministry of Health represents a big chunk of the expenses of this government. Forty-seven billion dollars is a lot of money no matter how you look at it. Yet there are good practices—I would call them best practices—that exist out there that fail to be implemented.

Yesterday, we were all proud to wear our little bluish-purple ribbon for epilepsy. Yet those people were here to tell us that there are hundreds and thousands of people that have epilepsy in Ontario that don't have equitable access to treatment because right now only Toronto and London have specialized care for epilepsy. You know what that means, Mr. Speaker? That means that if you live in northern Ontario, where I happen to live and where a good percentage of our population do live, you don't have access. That means that you are seen by your family physician, who will more than likely put you on Dilantin and hope that your convulsions stop. There are many other anticonvulsant medications out there that are covered by this government, but they don't have access to the physicians who know about them and know how to prescribe them.

We have an opportunity right here right now to say that we will look at equity of access, so that no matter where you live in Ontario you will have the same quality of care. The best practices are already there, but yet we trail behind in rolling out their implementation.

We also had the neurotrauma institute that came. They have developed some really innovative best practices, whether you talk about fall prevention or whether you talk about pressure ulcers, the bedsores that a lot of people with neurotrauma get, unfortunately, especially spinal cord injury people. Those are low-tech. It just needs to be implemented. We have what I call the valley of death. We have the strong, robust research that is being supported by this government—thank you—but then you have the valley of death. It doesn't get implemented, and if it does, it gets implemented in a few pilot projects but never gets rolled out in a way that would guarantee equitable access to every Ontarian no matter where they live, especially when those techniques, as I say, are low-tech. They don't cost more money; they just need people to know about them and put them into practice. It is really a huge opportunity lost.

A lot of what I have been talking about is prevention. When we look at a budget that is facing a $16-billion deficit, we want to make sure that the money we spend is money well spent, that gives us good results for the investment that we make. There are hundreds of opportunities to make those investments give us better results, but we don't act upon them.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the opportunities that lie in long-term care. Our long-term-care system is going through a bit of a rough time right now. You see, Mr. Speaker, they had been promised a 3% increase for the next three years, but now, like everybody else, they read the Drummond report, they read the paper, they hear about the austerity measures coming, and they don't know. The fact that they don't know makes it really hard to manage and really hard to get good value for money when you don't know how much money you're going to get.

1710

Oh, and look at this: We have a new Speaker. You look pretty good in this chair, Mr. Flynn, and con-

gratulations on becoming the Speaker. I just realized that we have a new Speaker in there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn): Temporary.

M^me^ France Gélinas: Temporary? Well, you know.

We also had a group come to Queen's Park last week. They were talking to us about chronic pain, and that will tie in to what the member from James Bay—

Interjection: Timmins–James Bay.

M^me^ France Gélinas: —Timmins–James Bay was talking about a few minutes ago, and that is the need for opioids, the need for narcotic medications, for some of the people that struggle with chronic pain.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? Since November of last year, there is a comprehensive strategy that has been worked upon and presented at the wish of the government—the government asked a task force to look at chronic pain management. The task force got together, got to work, looked at the best practices, looked at what could be done, and prepared a comprehensive report, a comprehensive chronic pain strategy, and they delivered it to the minister last November. This document has not been made public. This document has been sitting there.

Meanwhile, we're introducing a massive change in the limited toolbox that a primary care physician has to treat pain; that is, we're taking away OxyContin, with the devastating impact it has had. Do I want better management of narcotics? Absolutely. But I'm not blind. I can see what it will do to the people in my riding. We have hundreds of people addicted to that drug, and all of a sudden, we change the supply side of the equation. We're going to take that drug away. We're going to make it harder for people to get, and we're going to force a whole bunch of people that are addicted to this drug to transition to a new drug.

I can tell you exactly what will happen in my riding. A whole bunch of people that are addicted won't have any support whatsoever to deal with their addiction, but they will want that drug and it will drive their lives. They will go knock on every walk-in clinic; they will go to every emergency room that they can drive to; they will do anything they can to get a physician to prescribe it.

You know what that will mean to the primary care physicians, who will be bombarded by people that are dealing with an addiction and have nowhere to go but to knock on their office door and ask for a prescription for a narcotic that is no longer available to them? Not a pretty sight. Well, this is the sight that primary care physicians in northern Ontario are expected to look at.

Are there ways to deal with chronic pain? Absolutely. Are there a lot of people that are presently on narcotics that shouldn't be? Absolutely. Can we do better? I think we have to. But right now, we have the supply side of the equation that will be changed completely, but the human side is not being looked at whatsoever.

In the transition, it would be really nice to know: Where can people with musculoskeletal problems get physiotherapy, which is a good way to manage pain? Where could they get, maybe, acupuncture? Maybe they could get a little bit of chiropractic. Maybe they could—

Interjection.

M^me^ France Gélinas: But none of this is available to them. The only thing that is available free of charge is the visit to the physician, the prescription and the going to the pharmacy. So this is available to them; this is the course of action that we have given to them. Although a lot of other options exist, they are not available. Very few communities have free access to physiotherapy; you have to pay to go there. Why do you figure they didn't go there in the first place, Mr. Speaker? Why is it that their family physicians, who know that this pain could probably be managed with a good physiotherapy program, didn't send them there in the first place? Because those people don't have the money to pay. Well, years later, with an addiction added into the mix, physiotherapy is still not an option, acupuncture is still not an option, and chiropractors are still not an option because they don't have the money to pay. We have our massage therapy or laser; the list goes on. But none of this is covered. So the options that people with limited means can get access to are being completely changed with nothing else to replace them.

But yet, at the same time, we have a report that sits on the minister's desk, a report that would put forward some good solutions to help the primary care physicians who will be stuck handling this when we haven't added anything to their toolbox to be able to do that job.

Yesterday, some of you who are connected to health care would have gotten an email from the community health centre movement, the association of community health centres. A new report has been rolled out that shows with glowing statistics—I wish I had memorized them—the good outcomes that community health centres bring to our communities. We could see that if you receive your primary care from a community health centre—I haven't memorized the statistics, it's but close to 30% less visits to the emergency department. The report was glowing from the beginning to the end.

So through this interim supply motion, are we going to see a shift toward community-governed interdisciplinary care? I hope so, Mr. Speaker, but allow me to be skeptical. We have good models in place; we have opportunities to do better with the resources that already exist. I think what we need is a bit of political will to do the right thing.

Ça m'a fait plaisir de prendre quelques minutes cet après-midi pour ajouter ma parole à ceux et celles qui avaient parlé avant moi au sujet de cette proposition. La proposition est faite dans un cadre où on sait tous que le budget de l'Ontario fait face à un gros déficit—un déficit de 16 milliards de dollars. On sait que tout le monde devra mettre l'épaule à la roue. Tout le monde devra faire l'effort. Mais à même les argents existants, il y a des possibilités qui sont là. J'espère qu'on va les regarder et qu'on va les mettre en marche. Merci, monsieur le Président.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to speak to this motion which, of course, concerns money. I just want to take a look at an issue very briefly, where I believe the Ontario Liberal government has squandered a tremendous amount of taxpayer money. It concerns their very sudden decision to pull the plug on the power plant in Mississauga just 12 days before last October's closely fought provincial election. They gave absolutely no reason—the Premier did not at all. He was very vague as he tried to explain why he did this, but we all know that the cancelling of that plant was exorbitant. In fact, we've heard estimates that the poor taxpayer in the province of Ontario is going to be paying up to $1 billion. This is at a time when this government also has a $16-billion deficit. You have to ask yourself—this plant went through an arduous three-year approval process; it had the blessing of the McGuinty government in 2008; construction began in 2011; and then, shortly after, McGuinty, the Premier, announced that the plant would be stopped, even though the workers continued to be there for 58 more days. So here we have a problem of the cancellation of a plant. We all need to remember that earlier in 2010 they had stopped the construction of an even larger power plant in Oakville worth $1.2 billion. Taxpayers deserve to know why they're squandering money like this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 19. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m., March 8, 2012.

The House adjourned at 1721.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 8 March 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 8 mars 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Let us pray.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE ACT (EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE CONGÉ FAMILIAL POUR LES AIDANTS NATURELS (MODIFICATION DES NORMES D'EMPLOI)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 6, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver leave / Projet de loi 30, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to give my comments in support of Bill 30. I'm proud to stand here and discuss an important bill that will help Ontarians during a difficult time. I'm proud to stand here as this government continues to follow through on its platform promises.

The purpose of this bill is simple: It is to create a new unpaid, job-protected leave of absence of up to eight weeks per calendar year for an employee whose family member has a serious medical condition that requires care and support. I want to stress the job protection portion of this legislation.

We all know how stressful it is to go to work while thinking about the health of our loved ones: mothers thinking about their sick children, husbands thinking about their wives, sisters thinking about their brothers and children thinking about their parents. Surely this stress causes enormous distractions at work and losses in productivity.

The proposed legislation allows for Ontarians to take the time off to care for their loved ones while ensuring that they have their jobs to return to. This is an important point because when employers recognize the needs of their employees, it builds a healthy relationship between employers and employees. It creates community in a workplace. It builds confidence among employees toward their employers. Most importantly, it allows employees to take the time to care for their loved ones so that they can return to work and be productive employees.

As a registered nurse, as a former public health nurse, as a former nursing professor and long-term-care administrator, I have witnessed first-hand the many struggles of my patients and their families. Let me share a couple of life experiences with you and how the proposed legislation would have supported these families.

Consider one patient, an 87-year-old man with dementia, stroke and diabetes. His medical condition got worse; he was admitted to a long-term-care facility. His 47-year-old daughter, who works as a registered practical nurse, is a single mom with two adolescent children and is the only next of kin. The daughter has utilized all her vacation and sick days during the past year and is struggling to provide support to her elderly father and to care for her two teenage children. The proposed family caregiver leave legislation would have enabled Kelly, the daughter, to take up to eight weeks of unpaid leave without being concerned for her employment to care for her father.

Recently, a teacher in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt had to leave for Hong Kong to provide care and support to her elderly father, who was diagnosed with a serious medical condition. This teacher works for an understanding and supportive employer who granted her the leave of absence. Bill 30 would ensure that this teacher, or any employee in Ontario, could take up to eight weeks of unpaid, job-protected time away from work to care for a family member with a serious medical condition.

Very shortly, one of my constituents, a parent, will be coming to visit the Legislature. She has taken her daughter for a medical appointment at the Hospital for Sick Children. I know Natalie well as a friend and as a constituent, and this family care leave will enable her, if she was needed, to provide support for her family.

This legislation is important because there is a gap in the current leave of absence under the Employment Standards Act. The ESA does not provide long-term job protection leave for employees wanting to care for family members with serious medical conditions that require care or support where there is no risk of imminent death.

We currently have the family medical leave program. This program is unpaid, job-protected leave of up to eight weeks for employees who wish to care for a seriously ill individual who is at risk of death within 26 weeks. Employees on the family medical leave program can apply for the federal EI compassionate care benefit.

Additionally, the personal emergency leave program also exists, which provides a short-term, unpaid leave of up to 10 days each calendar year for a broad list of emergencies and illnesses. As a nurse, Mr. Speaker, this number of 10 days is not adequate. That's just two weeks of working days. I can tell you as a registered nurse that many of the medical conditions, especially with chronic illnesses—a family member will need more than 10 days of leave in order to provide care and support for an ill member of the family.

The difficulty is that if an employee has a young daughter who is diagnosed with cancer and her physician does not believe there's a significant risk of death within 26 weeks, the employee is not eligible for family medical leave. Yet, through this proposed legislation, the employee would be able to take up to eight weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to care for his or her seriously ill child.

Now, my colleagues may have stated that this would be a significant cost on small businesses. In this case, I would like to remind my colleagues across the floor that this is just the right thing to do. Our employees need to know that their employers will let them have the time off if they need to take care of their loved ones. Moreover, it is an unpaid leave and employers wouldn't have to pay for it.

Other colleagues have complained that this program is unpaid, that people can't take up to eight weeks of unpaid leave. Here I would like to remind my colleagues that the EI premium benefits are paid out by the federal government. The Minister of Labour has already written to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada to encourage the federal government to extend the EI coverage to this program, and I would encourage my Conservative colleagues across the floor to contact their federal cousins up in Ottawa to let them know that the EI premium should be extended to this program once this legislation is passed.

Additionally, not all the eight weeks have to be used at one time. They can be staggered, which will allow greater flexibility for employees, should they need it. I gave the example earlier, Mr. Speaker, about my constituents coming to visit the Legislature. So if a family member only wants to take one week instead of the full eight weeks, this particular legislation will allow that. Most importantly, employees need to know that they can take the time off to care for their loved ones with the security of knowing that they have a job to come back to.

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In a recent survey by the Human Resources Professionals Association, the respondents stated the following—let me share some data with all of you. Almost 96% support family caregiver leave either fully or in part. Over 30% of the respondents are either currently caregivers or have been in the past. Over 50% have noticed an increase in requests for caregiver leaves over the past five years.

A majority of the respondents to the survey noted that this issue is timely and urgent, and has an impact on many Canadians. Respondents also noted that this is a complicated issue, difficult to legislate and difficult to administer, and that they will give the government support and credit for addressing it, noting that the legislation is progressive and a step in the right direction for Ontario.

Many have noted that the issue of aging and ill family members affects productivity, and that regardless of the financial impact, it is in the employer's best interests to have the legislation passed. Respondents in general stated that failure to address this issue will result in expensive turnover, claims of short-term disability, sick leave and stress leave.

From this survey, Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear that both employers and employees recognize the importance of allowing employees to take unpaid leave away from work to care for family members with serious medical conditions, provided their job is protected during the leave.

Across Canada, there's similar legislation to support workers. Quebec allows certain employees to be absent from work without pay for up to 12 weeks over a period of 12 months to stay with family members because of a serious illness or a serious accident. Saskatchewan allows employees to take a maximum of 12 weeks—not the eight weeks we're proposing in our legislation—12 weeks off without pay in a 52-week period for a serious illness or injury of dependent immediate family members or 12 days total in a calendar year for a non-serious illness of a dependent family member.

Ontario would be the first province to provide standalone, unpaid job-protected leave of up to eight weeks for employees to provide care for a family member with a serious medical condition.

The proposed legislation has received stakeholder support, Mr. Speaker. They include the Ontario Home Care Association, which "welcomes the government's proposal to introduce amendments to the Employment Standards Act that would protect jobs for workers taking time off work to provide care for a family member." The Alzheimer Society of Ontario stated that "family caregivers who provide the bulk of care for people with dementia will especially benefit" from our proposal. The cancer society listed family caregiver leave as one of the measures it hoped to see implemented by this government to help Ontarians living with cancer.

There are a number of benefits to the proposed family caregiver leave legislation. It is anticipated that the proposed leave would help to reduce the financial and human resource burdens on health care services and reduce stressors that can lead to ill health among employees who are caring for their ill relatives. Families may avoid costly privately funded caregiving. With the growth of the aging population, the issue of aging and ill family members affects productivity, and regardless of the financial impact, it is in employers' and employees' best interests to have the proposed legislation passed.

The proposed legislation, as I said earlier, may prevent high turnover rates for some of our organizations and

reduce claims for short-term disability, sick leave and stress leave. I've seen that one too many times in my career as a registered nurse. I've seen request after request when registered nurses, staff and colleagues have consistently asked, "Can I take a leave? I've already exhausted my sick benefits and my vacation plan; therefore I need to take unpaid leave, okay?" And this is the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

I can share many stories with this House. Just last year around this time, I was at a well-renowned rehabilitation hospital. When you do rehabilitation nursing, it's not one day or one week; it's months, okay? I have met with many families, patients, extended family, who take long leaves—two to three months for cardiac rehab; two to three months or even years for neurological rehab. This is not days. We're talking about compassion. We're talking about care. Most importantly, it's about the right thing to do.

The proposed legislation is, most importantly, to protect jobs. No employees need to be fearful of losing their jobs when they have to take care of a loved one. Protecting jobs, the leave benefit, is what this proposed legislation is about. The employers would be creating a positive, loyal and productive workforce.

Our government wants to give every employee in Ontario the one thing they need during the difficult time caring for a loved one: the time to be there to listen, to provide care and to provide support. That's what this legislation is about. The proposed family care leave legislation, Mr. Speaker, is about taking care of Ontarians during difficult times. It is the right thing to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen reasonably closely to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt, and I'm very impressed. She's a former nurse, and I believe she was a school trustee before she came here.

I think the key issue here if you look at the bill—in general, the sentiment would be that we would be supportive. However, in closer detail, I think the member who spoke yesterday from our side, the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, who himself is a health care expert—he's a pharmacist—explained, in terms of his small business where he operates, what it means to small business.

I think the NDP in their comments—also I think the requirement to take a week at a time when it may only be necessary for an appointment, a day to take your mother or a loved one, put it that way, to an appointment or to the hospital for a procedure. You could maybe go back to work for a couple of days until she was being discharged or they were being discharged.

It's the structure of the bill, like in many other bills; I think the intent is laudable, but the implementation is terrible. That's really what I find most difficult with the bill.

You might say, on closer examination, there is no cost to the government of McGuinty at all. There's no cost to him—not a cent. But what it is for small business, maybe a mom and a pop and a few other people operation, is that they're going to be missing a person who could be operating their computer or their laundromat, whatever it is they're doing in their small business. And the individual who's off gets no pay. Who can take eight weeks off without pay?

It is a good idea. Let's rehearse here: It is a good idea; the implementation is faulty. I think they should withdraw the bill, send it to committee and get it right.

But there are so many examples of this under McGuinty. The energy file is completely messed up. The economy—there are no jobs: 600,000 people are unemployed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Good morning, Speaker, and thank you. I'm glad to be here in the House today to comment on G30, the family caregiver leave bill, that's proposed today. I don't think we can argue that this is not a feel-good bill. Everybody feels good about giving time off to someone who needs to be with their loved ones. I know for myself, if I was in that position, that I certainly would enjoy the flexibility of my employer having allowed me the time off to be with a family member who had a serious illness and who I had to attend to. I don't think that's the question or the purpose of the bill that we really need to debate. We all agree on that. We all need to be with our loved ones in a time of need.

I think the intent of the bill as it's described is well received for the idea, but the structure absolutely needs to be reviewed. There needs to be consultation with the community, with workers and with employers so that it's not a matter of the employee taking time off and perhaps feeling a reprisal from the employer and also perhaps the employer feeling that a valuable employee is lost to them perhaps for eight weeks and their business could suffer.

0920

On top of that, with an employee taking that time off, they may not even have the financial means to support themselves. So you're really putting that employee, unfortunately, in a difficult situation: being tugged at their heartstrings by financially leaving work to look after their loved ones, and the employer having perhaps a very challenging time when that employee leaves.

There has to be more thought in that leave with regard to helping the employee economically get through that time, and then perhaps the employer as well being involved in that process. So I urge this government to please review that before anything like this is considered and passed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: First of all, I would like on this day to wish a happy International Women's Day to all the women in Ontario, to all the women who are maybe following these proceedings and to all the women in the House. I want to commend women for their contributions to our society, for their strength that they often show and for the care that they often show.

We know, in regard to this legislation, that very frequently there's a group to whom an unequal share of the responsibility of caregiving has historically fallen, and that is women—and women who have the least are the most vulnerable. So I would like to, first of all, wish all the women a really happy International Women's Day. It's also a day for us to reflect on their contributions.

Getting back to the bill that we're debating this morning, I think we all agree we wouldn't want a mother to worry about a child who is seriously ill or injured. We wouldn't want a daughter to worry about their mother or father being seriously injured.

As my colleague has pointed out, when the time is needed, when a loved one is seriously ill, you need to take that time. So a business will have to come to terms with that. But what happens most often nowadays is that you risk your job. So this bill's intent is really not to put the caregiver in that situation of risking their job.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob Leone: I want to thank the member for Scarborough–Agincourt for her comments. I think she presented it very well.

I also want to just touch upon what the member for London–Fanshawe said. I think her words are very, very pertinent to the discussion. This is a kind of policy that really touches at people's heartstrings. It kind of warms the heart to know that we're going to be compassionate to those who require extra care. I think, from that perspective, there's a lot to be commended about the intent, as the member for Durham had said about this policy. But I also agree with the member from Durham, who said that the implementation lacks—there's something to be desired.

In the comments that the member for Scarborough–Agincourt made in this debate, she is asking us in the Ontario PC caucus to ask our federal cousins to actually implement a policy that they're actually talking about. Do you believe this?

Interjection: It's their job, isn't it?

Mr. Rob Leone: We have to do their job for them. And I say, we're happy to do your job for you; just give us the keys to your offices. We'll gladly make the policy, we'll gladly do the things that we need to do and we'll gladly pick up the phone and call our federal cousins. That's exactly what you want us to do. We'll gladly do that job for you.

In addition to doing that job, we'll fix the fiscal crisis that you got us in. We'll fix the debt crisis that you got us in, because that's what honest-to-goodness government actually does. We don't sit back and wait for other people to do our job for us, we do it ourselves. How novel an idea: a government actually makes decisions; it has a spine; it has a backbone; it implements what it says and has the capacity to do that. That's all we're asking for in this House, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Scarborough–Agincourt, you have two minutes to reply.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the members opposite from Durham, London–Fanshawe, my colleague here from York South–Weston, and Cambridge for your remarks.

Very clearly, this is not just feel-good proposed legislation. This is about every employee being given an opportunity to look after their loved ones, okay? Every one of us in this House has been an employee. We all have family challenges. To say it has good intent or it's difficult to implement—well, let me be very clear: We have a very fast-growing aging population. This proposed legislation ensures that every Ontarian who is in that sandwich generation, like myself and many others, has an opportunity to look after their loved ones during their time of need and not be fearful of losing their jobs.

The other important part here is the concern about the implementation difficulties and for small businesses there. What kind of employer-employee relationship will you have if you do not listen and you do not support your employees when they need that support? What kind of employer are you? I need to challenge that, okay?

At the end of the day, all of us—this government, this province—developed through small businesses. We are not saying that every business will go bankrupt or be disturbed because of this proposed legislation. The key piece here is the fact that now, for the first time in Ontario, every employee will be given an opportunity to look after their loved ones during the time of a serious medical condition, and that's the right thing to do.

At the end of the day, this is why we need to go through the committee: to review the various parts of the legislation and have comments and concerns be heard. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate? The member from Burlington.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 30.

All of us here at some point or another find ourselves in unfamiliar territory: A loved one is sick, has had a terrible turn, is in need and is alone. At that moment, there is nothing in the world that we want more than to be with them, to do all that we can for them, to help them with their recovery or lend comfort while they battle for their lives. We are not concerned with spreadsheets or speeches. We are not concerned with work that has, in a flash, become drained of all importance. In those kinds of difficult times, there is nothing we want more than to be with family to share strength and consolation.

In principle, I suspect that we agree that caregiver leave is a civilized initiative, an initiative that shows great compassion toward Ontario families at a time when it is most appreciated and needed—in principle.

In reality, Bill 30, the Family Caregiver Leave Act, is a classic case of appearances being deceptive. While the intent is good, you don't have to look at this bill too long or too hard to see that it is lacking credible weight. As previous speakers in this debate have pointed out, the most substantial thing about it seems to be the holes in it.

In a broad sense, you can argue that, yes, it would be helpful to be able to take eight weeks of leave from a job without endangering your hold on that job. But in family medical leave and personal emergency leave, there are measures in place that address much of that concern. Some have suggested that compassionate employers would be open to these measures with or without legislation. That strikes me as credible.

Even setting those concerns aside, it seems to me that there are also going to be pretty basic issues with this bill as it is written. How will this impact the province's entrepreneurs and small businesses that often have highly specialized staff, no duplication of work and who are already up against their share of operational challenges? Who will it impact: contract workers or part-timers, who make up an increasing share of our workforce? Why is it mandatory to take time off at this point—unpaid time off—in blocks of whole weeks?

How do we determine who is eligible for this leave? Who decides the eligibility? How would you objectively define a serious medical condition or injury? Who protects the interest of the worker? Who protects the interest of the employer? Who will enforce standards around this proposed legislation? How will the government bankroll that enforcement?

0930

As workers rights advocacy groups have pointed out, the McGuinty government has hinted that the Employment Standards Act budget will be slashed by $6 million. This is a government that is apparently prepared to short-change workers' rights by $6 million. But I don't want to suggest for a second that the McGuinty Liberals don't care about people's rights, Speaker. Far from it.

After all, this is a government that is contributing $5 million to build a human rights museum—in Winnipeg; Winnipeg, Speaker. True, it is a massively over-budgeted museum, so you understand how the Liberals would naturally gravitate to it. But $5 million? You do start to wonder about their focus. You do start to wonder about their priorities.

On Bill 30, as with any legislation, success depends on monitoring and enforcement of the law. The protections we're reading about here only exist to the extent that they are defended. Legislation without enforcement is just sentimental PR. I don't want to suggest that we are looking at that, not just yet, but at the same time, it's pretty obvious that we are a long way from solid ground.

If you were a cynic or truly jaded soul, you might also suggest that this is a way of spinning employment status, because under this arrangement both the person on leave and the replacement worker—presumably a contract worker—have jobs; they just happen to be the same job. They could have a way of padding labour statistics and masking the very real and serious challenges that this province faces when it comes to getting its economy back on track. Of course, we now have some 600,000 Ontarians out of work, so you would understand if the government was inclined to spin wherever possible. But this is not a time for funny business with numbers; this is a time for getting down to business—full stop. We are talking about workers who are already emotionally exposed. This is not a time to be offering them job security based on hopes and wishes.

You get the feeling that there has been little stakeholder consultation in this process. You also get the feeling that this bill is founded on the notion that the federal government will ride in to save the day. You get the feeling that Bill 30 imagines the feds will offer up to eight weeks of financial support to workers on leave by way of unemployment insurance. As I say, it's a feeling. It's just a feeling, because at this point on second reading, there has been no agreement of terms with the federal government.

But under the rosiest interpretation, we're looking at the possibility of ill-defined paid leave with bulletproof job security—an insurable benefit with no monitoring or enforcement; a program with no criteria for eligibility and no credible safeguards against people taking advantage of loopholes. That seems like a situation that is ripe for abuse, ripe for fraud. Would people misuse the new system? Perhaps, Speaker.

Even without Bill 30, you could argue that demand for employment supports exceeds supply. Despite Ontario having an unemployment rate that has been above the national average for more than five years, less than a third of unemployed Ontarians receive employment insurance.

When you poke a hole in the daydream and size things up in the cold light of day, the shortcomings of this bill come into sharp relief. The lack of detail is not surprising, of course. It's not unexpected. This is becoming a trademark of the back-of-a-napkin brand of planning we've seen from the McGuinty government. I wish I didn't think that way. I am in my fifth month here, fewer than 20 days in the House, and I'm trying really hard not to become disillusioned. But I look across the aisle, and in my short time here, I have to tell you that the reckless behaviour and disrespect for anything other than the government's pet programs is pretty brazen.

Let me go back to October. The throne speech was a sobering signal that Ontarians should buckle down and get ready for yet another crushing year. The McGuinty government has failed to adequately respond to our province's economic predicament. Honest, hard-working Ontarians are losing their jobs, energetic students are graduating into an employment wasteland and government spending remains undisciplined and unfocused.

In the throne speech, the government rolled out, to great fanfare, an extra $2.5 billion in new program spending, this despite Ontario's dizzying $16-billion deficit—which has ballooned by more than $1 billion since the election—and sickening projected debt of $300 billion. Then, as now, the government's math just doesn't add up.

I've said it before: The government strategy is like a fad diet. The Premier is drinking twice as much diet soda and eating twice as much diet ice cream and hoping he'll find a six-pack under all that budget bloat. Let me assure

you, Mr. Speaker, although I have absolutely no desire to see the Premier in a Speedo, I would very much like to see him whip the province's finances back into shape. The government has racked up a historic level of deficits and debts, as well as presiding over some of the deepest and most painful job losses in generations.

In short, Liberal economic policies have failed. Ontario's unemployment rate has surged above the national average for more than five straight years. Ontario has lost more jobs during the recession than all other provinces combined. We need to optimize the public sector and eliminate waste, reducing the size and cost of government. You can't simply spend your way to prosperity. Speaker, it's time for Dalton McGuinty to stop digging us all an even deeper hole. Everything should be done with a view to fiscal responsibility.

But I suppose we shouldn't be that surprised that there is also the smoke and mirrors, the sleight of hand we see again and again from this government. The southwestern Ontario development fund, for example, will apparently be financed by shuffling funds around from other initiatives and programs within the Ministry of Economic Development and Innovation. During the debate on Bill 11, the so-called Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act, we learned that some $66 million in research funding at universities and hospitals was going to be siphoned off and put into the creation of this fund. Apparently, the government feels the connection between research and economic innovation is a little shaky.

The Ontario PC Party remains committed to the belief that we cannot support any new spending without identifying an equivalent saving somewhere else. Spending more than you take in isn't going to balance the budget. In fact, that kind of behaviour is how Premier McGuinty got us into the debt crisis in the first place.

Speaker, it reminds me of that kind of math that went into calculating the province's deficit at the end of August, just six weeks before the election. Things were looking up, we were told. The deficit was coming down faster than projected, thanks to the McGuinty government's superhuman powers of fiscal restraint—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): On both sides of the House, I'd ask you to come to order, please.

If I could just remind the speaker also, we don't refer to people in the House by their names but by their title or their riding.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: The Minister of Finance pegged the deficit for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011, at $14 billion. That was down $2.7 billion from the shortfall projected in the 2011 budget. Less than two months later, we knew that the number had risen to $16 billion. That's a heck of a margin of error; that's a heck of a wobble.

Speaker, I would like to know that our government's policy is being built on evidence. I would like to know that it is helping to promote the kind of activity that will make a real difference in the economy today, tomorrow and in years to come. Ontarians need the assurance that the Premier's government will be fundamentally reforming its way.

Do we need to get on with the business of government? Yes; yes, we do. Do we need to get Ontario working again? Yes, absolutely; no question about it. Will the McGuinty Liberals get on with the job without playing all of their same old ridiculous games—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would remind the member again: Refrain from using people's names.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Unfortunately, Speaker, the answer to that very important question is still up in the air. Obviously, employees will want to have the freedom to put work to one side when we have to. And obviously, we'll all have reason to feel like doing exactly that at one time or another.

0940

You hear a lot of talk about the sandwich generation, the generation caught between aging parents and growing children—a generation that is financially extended on both fronts. Members of that generation certainly feel the tension between work and home life, and that's not going to change anytime soon.

My home riding of Burlington is an example of what we're looking at. In the decade from 1996 to 2006, Burlington's population aged 50 to 65 grew by 36%, and its population aged 65-plus grew by 44%—and this while the city's total population increased by 20%. I'm sure that new census information will paint a picture that is every bit as dramatic as that. In case you missed it, this is the baby boom making its way through the pipeline.

In her introductory remarks, the Minister of Labour spoke about our aging population, which is growing steadily. She cited some statistics: We're going to have 43% more seniors a decade from now; we're going to have twice as many seniors 20 years from now. We're living longer lives, more active lives, but that doesn't mean that we're escaping everything that goes along with being human. We still get sick, we still get injured, we still fall prey to disease. We hope that there will be someone there for us at those moments and that they will have compassion and love in their hearts.

Older Ontarians obviously have a greater need for chronic care and long-term-care facilities. At some point, their families will inevitably need to intervene on their behalf at a time when the whole world seems like it's ready to capsize.

Six years ago, more than a third of Burlington's population was 50-plus, and that age group represented well over half of the city's total population in the decade leading up to that. Fully 57% of the population growth in Burlington during that period was in the 55-plus demographic. So yes, the silver tsunami is very real. I can tell you that it has hit Burlington earlier than most communities.

As boomers age, the strain on the health care system will obviously be immense. The challenge for policymakers and public officials will be unprecedented. That's not a reason to throw up our hands in defeat; it's an argu-

ment for investing very carefully and very intelligently in the system that we have. And the fact is that the existing system has obvious shortcomings in terms of long-term care and home care. The fact is that the system has shortcomings in terms of geriatric support.

In 2008, it was estimated that there were only about 200 geriatricians in all of Canada. That's about one geriatrician for every 30,000 Canadians aged 65-plus. In some Ontario communities, it can take a year and a half just to get in to see one. So at worst, it strikes me that we're taking people who are emotionally raw and on edge and giving them a crash course in the shortcomings of the system: about the limitations of OHIP, about all sorts of petty aggravations that do nothing to promote care and compassion.

So I think that this bill could use a lot more meat on its bones. If the government is serious about extending these rights to workers, serious about making a meaningful change to the existing Employment Standards Act, there needs to be more to it. If the government is going to hand employees a new obligation and expect them to fulfill the spirit of the legislation without any real structure, definition or boundaries, I think that's asking an awful lot.

I come back to my original caution about judging a book by its cover. For all of its sound bites and appeal, this bill plays into all of the worst stereotypes about the kind of legislation we've seen from the Premier's government for eight years: long on posturing, lean on practicality. We in the Ontario PC caucus have feelings and families; we have suffered and we have lost. We have recognized that there may be a time and place where something like the Family Caregiver Leave Act would have a place in the order of things—something like Bill 30—but not Bill 30 as it stands.

My honourable colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex has pointed out that ministry personnel have barely any statistical evidence that Ontario workers are being denied time off from their jobs to care for loved ones in time of crisis. Standing here in this House last week, he said, "Not only have there been no studies, there aren't even mechanisms in place to collect the kind of data that would give the members of this House—and the Ontario taxpayers who must pay for it—a clear idea of any real or imagined problem this bill claims to solve." That's one of the bigger holes I mentioned earlier.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, Bill 30 offers less protection than a hospital gown and more holes in it than a roll of surgical gauze. I applaud the sentiment, but I cannot in good conscience support this bill as it is currently written.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

M^me^ France Gélinas: I would like to congratulate one of our new members in this House for her depth of knowledge of her riding. Some of the statistics that she brought forward show that she took the time and effort to really get to know the people who could be impacted by such a bill. The statistics that she shared with us this morning regarding her particular riding and the percentage of people who are elderly, the growth in her population—I was kind of taken aback when I heard that 57% of the demographic growth in Burlington came from the 55 and over. Those statistics are very telling. They're telling of a need for action.

I think her interpretation of the bill, which certainly has a good title, the family caregiver act—I mean, who wouldn't want to do something for a family caregiver? We all know that when they need to be brought into action, it's usually in circumstances that are hard on families. She also was quite eloquent at talking about some of the shortcomings of the bill.

I find her comparison about a hospital gown quite interesting. We all know that they don't cover much, and I think it describes this bill quite adequately: It doesn't cover much either. Well done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I just wanted to join the conversation this morning. I was listening to the member from Burlington, and I wasn't sure what bill she was talking about there. Originally, I felt quite hopeful, in that I thought she was going to provide some useful and constructive advice with regard to the family caregiver leave, and then it deteriorated rapidly.

At the end of the day, I think we ran on this particular issue. I want to remind them that the family caregiver leave was part of our platform in the last election. We campaigned on the idea of giving families support.

Certainly, when she spoke a little bit about the businesses and what a hardship this would be for them—we had some very interesting results that were passed along to us, when we originally introduced the bill, by the Human Resources Professionals Association. They did a survey and they had 616 responses—a very, very interesting group of studies that they did. They talked with a lot of businesses. Of course, this is a group of professsionals who go out and recruit people for business. They came back with some interesting quotes, and they said that it was a very good retention initiative. They reminded us how costly it is to recruit, select and train new employees, and that it's better to allow family caregiver leave, to go through the process, rather than going out to hire a new employee.

At the end of the day, this is an opportunity to debate legislation. I didn't hear anything constructive from the member from Burlington. Really, she's very cynical about the bill. This is a place to provide constructive, useful suggestions on how to make legislation better. The people of Ontario expect that of us. They expect us to not take cheap shots about what legislation should be, what it could be. This is about providing useful, thoughtful suggestions. The residents of your riding expect that and they need it. When they're in crisis, they expect us to be there to support them, to be that safety net. That's what this legislation is designed to be. I would encourage her to have another look at the legislation, to provide some useful conversation with regard to it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

0950

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the bill, the Family Caregiver Leave Act.

To me, there's nothing more important than family. We can all agree that family has an imperative and a profound impact on our lives on a day-to-day basis and the kind of individuals we are.

I've noticed, however, that this bill doesn't actually address the concerns that day-to-day families are facing. Quite frankly, when I was campaigning and going out in my riding, door-knocking, I was hearing that families are struggling to make ends meet. Sure, they would love to stay and take care of their loved ones who are at home and need assistance, but they don't have the opportunities financially to do that when their hydro bills are too high or they don't have a job. Oh, maybe that's the government's position—over 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost in Ontario; lots of individuals can look after their family members now. That's not our approach.

One of the things I've noticed as well standing here—and as an educator, one of the things you look for is patterns, the development of patterns. This is a classic manoeuvre by this current government: to divert. They use cute little names, making it sound—Family Caregiver Leave Act—very compassionate but, in truth, it's full of holes, like the member from Burlington, my colleague, pointed out.

Interjection: Window dressing.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's window dressing, and enough of this. Let's get to the heart of the matter. Let's actually present a bill that is going to do some good for individuals who need it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Good morning, Speaker. I'm happy to stand here and comment on the presentation from the member from Burlington.

What I observed today in this House is that you can't have the back-and-forth little digs. It's a minority government. We were given a mandate to come here, respect each other, respect each other's options, choices and decisions, but collaboratively come together and make a bill the best it can be.

So though I respect the bill that's being presented, I also have the right or the mandate from my constituents to stand here and say I don't agree with some of the things that you have. I agree with the premise. We all do. But we need to maybe listen to each other, try to accommodate or incorporate and compromise and make this bill the best it can be for everyone, not just one person's thought.

When we talk about how the employer's perspective will be perceived, how the employee's perspective is going to be received, that's what the open discussion is about. From an employee's perspective: "I'm not going to be paid for the leave," that is a hardship for many employees. From the employer's perspective—"Can I have that valuable employee away for eight weeks?" Like the member from Scarborough–Agincourt said, how could employers not be compassionate? The reality is, employers may be put in a hard place. The reality is, employers sometimes can't afford to do that or some just don't.

In a perfect world, it would be great if we could all just agree and allow someone out for eight weeks. The bills would stop coming and the employer could carry on its business, but it's not a perfect world.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Burlington, you have two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: First of all, I'd like to apologize, Speaker, for saying the Premier's name.

Then, I'd also like to speak to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt. It was very well received. I'd also like to thank the member from London–Fanshawe—that was very articulate, how you spoke there—the member from Nickel Belt, the Minister of Labour and the member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

I have enjoyed the comments here today in second reading, and I'm confident that they will help to enrich understanding of the bill before us and perhaps strengthen the compassion of legislation being produced here.

Today we are discussing Bill 30, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, in respect of family caregiver leave. The bill proposes the introduction of compassionate, unpaid, job-protected work leave for up to eight weeks so that they can take a leave of absence without pay to provide care or support to a family member who has a serious medical condition. Those employees would be entitled to take up to eight weeks each calendar year with respect to each family member covered by regulation.

On the face of it, it is a compassionate bill, a bill that allows family to care for family, to allow Ontarians to look after Ontarians. This is an interesting proposal, and it certainly touches on some of the key issues coming before us both here in the Legislature and across the province.

As I say, it is an interesting proposal, and it certainly sounds a feel-good note. It tugs at the heartstrings. It touches us all. On that count it is a success. But in my opinion, it has a lot of blind spots, a lot of loopholes and a lot of unanswered questions, some of which I outlined here today. Until those substantial shortcomings are addressed, Bill 30 will not have the ability to deliver on its promises.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^me^ France Gélinas: I think it is my turn to say a few words about the Family Caregiver Leave Act. I would like to start by reading the paragraph in the bill that really sets out the entitlement. Actually, before I even start, I would like to thank the Minister of Labour for being in the House to listen to the comments that are being made about a bill that she brought forward. I appreciate her dedication to making sure that the bill she brings

forward—she is aware of ways to make it better. I appreciate her being here. We're not allowed to say when they're not there, but we're allowed to say when they are there, Mr. Speaker.

So back to the bill: "Entitlement to leave"; this is paragraph 2 if some of you want to go on the Internet and check out the bill. It reads as follows: "An employee is entitled to a leave of absence without pay to provide care or support to an individual described in subsection (4) if a qualified health practitioner issues a certificate stating that the individual has a serious medical condition."

First, I will speak a little bit about the "qualified health practitioner." In the bill, a qualified health practitioner is defined as "a person who is qualified to practise medicine"—quite easy to understand; that's a physician, and we all know who they are. Then the act keeps going and says, "or, in the prescribed circumstances, a member of a prescribed class of health practitioners." This, Mr. Speaker, is mumbo-jumbo that means a nurse practitioner.

I dream of the day where, when a bill is presented in front of us where a nurse practitioner is allowed to do something such as give you the leave of absence slip that you need, we will actually call them by their name. We call physicians "a person who practices medicine." We all know what that means. Why is it that when we talk about nurse practitioners—it seems like there's a reluctance to recognize that they are a bona fide, qualified, primary health care provider.

More and more Ontarians, more and more people in this province rely on nurse practitioners as their first point of contact for primary care. They are the ones they would be going to if they need such a paper to have the leave of absence. But you see, the laws are kind of reluctant to identify them, so we describe them as—and if anybody can see the link here—"in the prescribed circumstances, a member of a prescribed class of health practitioners." Nurse practitioners are also called "Registered nurse extended class."

So this is how we describe them in the bill. I hope a time will come where we won't be shy of calling nurse practitioners and putting them into our bills. They have certainly taken their place within the primary care sector in Ontario. I hope at some point we will see them in our bills.

1000

Then it goes on to say, "a qualified health practitioner issues a certificate stating that the individual has a serious medical condition." A bill is words, and in a bill, words mean a lot. "Serious medical condition" is a term, terminology, that the insurance companies in Ontario have more or less appropriated to themselves. The insurance companies use that terminology, "serious medical condition," to define a pretty narrow range of serious medical conditions.

I have been listening to the debates of colleagues from all sides of the House, and a lot of us talk about elderly parents needing a little bit of help. They talk about seniors as they age maybe needing a little bit of caregiving. A lot of examples have been given linking home care needs to the need for a family caregiver, which is absolutely true. If you're in need of home care, you're probably in need of a family caregiver also.

But then we have this bill that limits who can qualify. In order to qualify, you will need your physician or your nurse practitioner to sign you a slip. In order for them to sign this slip, they will have to assess the person as having a serious medical condition. Well, the aging parent may have high blood pressure, their vision has gone down, their hearing has gone down, they cannot eat as well as they used to, they have a little bit of a problem with their balance and a little bit of arthritis, or maybe their memory is starting to fade. But although you put all of this together, and they are in need of help because they cannot cope at home anymore, I don't know one physician or one nurse practitioner who would look at the patient I just described to you and say they meet the serious medical condition that has been imposed into this act.

Terminology means everything in a bill, and in this bill I have no idea why we have chosen those particular words, "serious medical condition," because this is a term that the insurance company uses all the time. In my knowledge, they have branded this term to mean—and usually, if you have to fill out an insurance slip, they have a very selected few conditions that mean this. For some of the insurance companies, a lower limb amputation, the losing of a leg, would not qualify as a serious medical condition in the way that they use this terminology. This terminology is used by every physician and every nurse practitioner in Ontario, yet we have chosen to put it in the bill.

This means that all of the feel-good examples that we have talked about, where we have aging parents and grandparents or neighbours, who go through the natural process of aging—you have to realize, Mr. Speaker, that aging is not a medical condition; aging is not a disease. Aging is a natural process that happens to each and every one of us. It is not a medical condition, and it is certainly not a serious medical condition. But with aging, there often comes a time where we need a little bit of family caregiving. There often comes a time where we need caregiving altogether; it doesn't matter if it comes through the home care system or through your family or your friend or your extended network. Aging is not included in "serious medical condition," because aging is not a disease.

So it doesn't matter how many chronic ailments we pile on those people. If you go to see your nurse practitioner or your physician, and you say, "I need time to help my mother move into a retirement home," or "I need time to help my mother move in with me," or do a renovation in her house or "take her to a series of important health appointments," you are not going to qualify for that leave the way we have it written now.

I think when I heard the minister speak, and when I heard some of her colleagues speak, in their minds, they had the intention of making that available to the aging

population of Ontario. But this is not what the bill in front of us is saying, is it, Mr. Speaker? The bill in front of us used "serious medical condition." So I think we need a little bit of revision.

I see that the time is going by, so I will move on to another part, which is one that has been talked about quite a bit, and that is the fact that in the bill—and I will read the bill again—under section 5, it talks about the periods that you can take this leave: "An employee may take a leave under this section only in periods of entire weeks." You're allowed up to eight a year.

This is also problematic. Although a lot of workers don't have caregiver leave that is afforded to them, a lot of workers do have bereavement leave. I don't want to wish any harm on anybody, but it could very well be that if you qualify for a really serious medical condition—a loved one gets into a motor vehicle accident, we pick them up in pieces from the side of the highway, bring them to a tertiary care hospital and then the worst happens. So now you're stuck in that one week of unpaid leave, but your employment contract tells you that you're allowed paid bereavement leave and it has to be taken within so many days, which means that you may be stuck in that unpaid caregiver leave and miss out on the paid bereavement leave if the serious medical condition turns for the worse.

I spent 25 years in health care, and unfortunately, a lot of serious medical conditions don't turn out the way we all wish. We all wish for a loved one to recover, of course, but we have to be looking at this with a set of eyes that looks at what a serious medical condition really means and how it sometimes ends. It sometimes ends badly, with the person leaving us, and then you're into funeral arrangements.

Many people in this House have said that it could be useful to be able to take one or two days at a time, to be able to bring a loved one to Toronto for a specialist appointment and bring them back to Sudbury; there could be a use for that. But, no, you will have to take an entire week. I don't get it. I don't understand why the bill has been written so that it has to be a week at a time.

There are, as I said, a number of issues with the way the bill is written that I hope everybody in this House will consider changing, and changing for the better; changing the way that we describe who can give you this paper that allows you the leave.

I wish we would also be more specific as to not being allowed to charge to give you such a certificate. It is all fine to say that you will need a qualified health practitioner—we all understand now that those are physicians and nurse practitioners—who will issue a certificate. Well, unfortunately, issuing a certificate is not something that is covered by OHIP. So unless we prescribe it in legislation—and some legislation does that; you're not allowed to charge to fill out a certificate for WSIB. There are a number of certificates that are required where the family physician, or any physician, is not allowed to charge. But if you don't specify it in the bill, then not only will you not get paid to take that leave, but you will have to pay to get the certificate. And God forbid that you decide that you and your sister will take Mom to Toronto for her appointment, because she will have to pay and so will you.

1010

It would be, I think, a nice gesture toward those people that are the caregivers if we were to add into the bill a little bit of a descriptive as to how those certificates cannot be charged for. We do this in a lot of other circumstances. I think in this one, I have heard nothing but good words toward caregivers. We know what they do for the people of Ontario, for families, for communities and for our province, and we appreciate their great work. Wouldn't it be a nice way to appreciate them by saying that they will be able to get those certificates without having to pay for them?

Another point that I have talked about many times before, when I had the opportunity to do little two-minute responses on this bill, is the fact that you don't get paid. The issue of who qualifies is very problematic to me, because if you have to meet the criteria of a serious medical condition, Mr. Speaker, those people will be in bad, bad shape.

The one that always qualifies is the young kid who gets into a motor vehicle accident and gets flown to Sick Kids or to CHEO. And then, if you live where I live, in northern Ontario, the family tries to make its way down there as fast as they can because your child needs you. That would qualify for a care leave. But then, I don't know one employer who would tell his employee, "No, you cannot be with your son or daughter on their hospital bed as they are clinging to life and you don't know how things are going to pan out."

It would have been nice to come out with a little bit more substance as to who will this bill apply to, because once you put this criterion of a serious medical condition—so really limited the field as to who that is—and you look on the ground as to how difficult it is for those people to be absent from work, I don't think we're talking a whole lot of people. Don't get me wrong: There are a lot of workers in Ontario who are in very precarious work, but when your child has been picked up by an ambulance and flown to Sick Kids, you are a useless worker, because every cell in your body tells you that you want to be with that child, with that husband, with that spouse, and employers recognize this. They can try to keep you at work all they want; you're not going to be productive whatsoever, because your mind will be forever with that person who needs you.

So the fact that it's a very narrow range of conditions which would qualify you for the caregiver leave, the fact that if you do qualify you don't get paid, makes that bill certainly a feel-good, but it could do so much more. It could do so much more if we already had in place a way for them to have access to income replacement, but we haven't done that part. It could be so much more if the definition was not limited to serious medical, but have more things that include more types of needs, basically targeting seniors who are often, as they age, in need of caregivers—but none of this is there.

There are people in very precarious work who will benefit from this some of the time, but it is so limited. We all agree, everybody who has spoken before me, to the valuable work that caregivers bring to our communities. Why don't we go the extra step and make sure that the spirit of the bill is captured in the words that we use in the bill? Right now, Mr. Speaker, I don't think it is. I think it's a wasted opportunity and I think in some points, it's kind of a disrespect to people who invest a lot of time, effort and energy looking after their loved one, who now know that this bill is coming but don't realize that it won't apply to them.

So there's some good intention; I hope we will be able to modify the bill to turn the good intentions into good actions.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to draw attention to page William Hume's family in the gallery today: his mother, Heather; his father, Colin; his brother, Trevor; his sister, Victoria; and his aunt, Marla Hume, and to say that page William Hume was the page valedictorian of this session. Welcome.

M^me^ France Gélinas: We have some personal support workers with us today. They are home care workers—our heroes. It's my pleasure to introduce Pam Huckle, Connie Ndlovu, Kelly O'Sullivan and Annabelle Zarate. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M. Grant Crack: Merci, monsieur le Président. Il me fait un grand plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue aux élèves de 40 écoles secondaires francophones de l'Ontario, qui sont ici derrière moi. Bienvenue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introductions. The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London—

M. Grant Crack: Ces élèves, qui représentent les écoles de leur région, participent—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry, I was excited about keeping things moving. Finish.

M. Grant Crack: Thank you, sir. Ces élèves, qui représentent les écoles de leur région, participent au sixième Parlement jeunesse francophone, qui se déroule ici même à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario. Merci à Thérèse Nadeau pour son excellent travail. Aussi, il y a 10 étudiants de ma circonscription qui participent au Parlement. Bienvenue.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Let the House know that this week has been Pharmacy Awareness Week. I have a guest today from London, Ontario: Mr. Jim Semchism, owner of Ealing Pharmacy. He's the one who led the charge to remove the sale of tobacco products from pharmacies in 1995. Eight members of his extended family are pharmacists.

Miss Monique Taylor: Today I'd like to welcome my dear friend Alexander Brown and his students from the International Language Schools of Canada. Today he has students with him from Brazil, Switzerland, Colombia, Korea, Japan and Mexico. Welcome to them.

Also, I'd like to welcome the CUPE members and the PSW, and at the same time I'll take a moment to wish everybody a happy International Women's Day.

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a group of people here from Snowball Corners who are here with the Moraine Can't Wait campaign. They have delivered an 8,000-card petition in support of protecting this incredible jewel we have, from Peterborough to the Niagara escarpment. They are Debbe Crandall, Victoria Foote, Debbie Gordon, John Hassell and Josh Garfinkel. Thank you for coming and supporting the moraine.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I am very pleased today to introduce John Gillespie, president, and Pat Jilesen, vice-president, of the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture; Bethanee Jensen, provincial director of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario; and Jennifer Small, wife of CFFO president Lorne Small, as well as Bill Palmer, a professional engineer who has done extensive research on the impacts of industrial wind turbines.

M^me^ France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président. J'ai de la grande visite qui est venue de très loin aujourd'hui. Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de vous les présenter. De l'École secondaire catholique Champlain : Steffany Byrnes et Edréa Fechner. Du Collège Notre-Dame de Sudbury, j'ai Patrick Diotte, Émilie Bouchard, puis Benjamin Doudard. Merci beaucoup d'être là. Merci d'avoir fait le voyage.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'd like to welcome the Matthews Hall student Parliament, who are here to watch proceedings along with Alana Hepworth and Jen McKay.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my great pleasure to welcome to the Legislature this morning Mr. Steve Berg, the executive director of the Canadian Christian Embassy. He's currently overseeing activities in the Canadian Christian Embassy in Ottawa. His organization, Power to Change, is committed to helping Canadians reach their world and address their needs through the power of faith.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: I rise today first to say Happy International Women's Day to all the women in this chamber and all the women in our lives.

I also rise to introduce to Sylvia Kim, who is with the legislative internship program, who has been with my office over the last number of weeks. It's with mixed feelings that I say goodbye to her because I know she'll move on to future endeavours, but I certainly hope that she enjoyed her time with my office. Sylvia, thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Vaughan we have at Queen's Park today to see page Samantha Mariano, Sabrina Mandarello, the mother; Domenic Mariano, the father; Sara Mariano, the sister; and Josie Mandarello, the grandmother. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Also, in the Speaker's gallery today, we have M. Gilles Morin, the former member who represented the

riding of Carleton East from 1989 to 1999 in the 33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th Parliament. Welcome.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier—especially for the members in the gallery and for our friends. For the last two weeks our party has been offering ideas to tackle Ontario's biggest challenges: the deficit and the jobs crisis.

While we've been proposing ideas that save billions and create jobs, you continue to spend. We propose energy policies that add jobs while your FIT program kills jobs and drives up costs. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has presented the Affordable Energy and Restoration of Local Decision Making Act.

Premier, if you don't have any solutions, will you get behind our party's bill?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, to the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Let's just be clear what we all stand for. When we brought forward tax reform a couple of years ago to strengthen the economy, attract investment and build jobs in Ontario, the party opposite said no. When we brought forward initiatives such as the southwest economic development fund and the eastern Ontario development fund to strengthen the economy, attract investment and build jobs, the other party said no. When we brought forward the green investment act and the feed-in tariff to attract investment, strengthen the economy and attract jobs, the other party said no.

We're for jobs. We're for growth. We're for new ideas. They're the party of no.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I'll try for the Premier again. Our bill cancels the job-killing FIT program and restores local decision-making powers to municipalities. Premier, last week at ROMA you spoke of letting municipalities have more say. Yet only a few weeks ago, your party voted against the member from Prince Edward–Hastings's bill that would do exactly that.

I realize you're conflicted, Premier, but you have a second chance. Will you vote to restore local decision-making power?

1040

Hon. Christopher Bentley: So we know where we stand: In 2003, we said we were getting out of coal because it makes people sick. We're cleaning up the air. We've been consistent. They like coal.

We said we were going to bring in renewable energy to accelerate getting out of coal and clean up the air. They've been consistent in here and they've said no in here.

We've said we are going to bring in a review of our green energy approach to build on its strengths so we can continue to get out of coal, grow the economy and build jobs. We are determined to clean up the air, determined to attract investment, determined to make sure that we are the solid foundation for the green economy of the future. That's where we stand. We know where they stand. The future is with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Let's talk about a few consequences of your job-killing FIT program. You actually use wind and solar to replace clean, affordable, reliable hydroelectric power. Last year alone, spilling water cost our ratepayers $300 million. And because you give wind and solar priority on the grid, you're abruptly shutting down nuclear units, venting steam on a regular basis. We all know these units were not designed for that. So you're spilling water, venting steam and draining jobs.

Premier, isn't it time you mopped up this mess and supported our bill?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: You know, it's an interesting suggestion that the party opposite makes for us when we're drilling a third tunnel at Niagara Falls and we've got the Lower Mattagami—both hydroelectric facilities that will be coming on very soon.

It's hard to know which way the wind blows for the party opposite, because when they're back in their ridings, speaking truth to neighbour, my colleague opposite and his colleagues say yes to solar and yes to wind, and when they're here, they say no to solar and no to wind.

He put up solar panels when he was the member on the roof of city hall. He stood to support wind projects when he's in his riding. When he's here, he says—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. We'll try again.

Let's talk about the 20,000 phantom jobs that you say exist. When I met with the Samsung executives, I asked them how you came up with that number, and they explained to me that there's steel coming from the Soo for the turbines, so you count those existing steel jobs. You also count the existing truckers. There are concrete companies with existing employees who pour the footings, so you count them, existing employees, as well. I guess all that's left are the temporary labourers and your lobbyists.

Minister, aren't your claims based on nothing more than fictitious jobs and voodoo math?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I think the question provides the answer. When you put up a renewable energy project, you do need steel from the Soo, and those workers are producing that steel. You do need plants like

Siemens in Tillsonburg and CS Wind down Windsor way to actually produce the components. You do need electricians and millwrights and other trades to put it up. Those are all good jobs in the province of Ontario which do not exist but for the renewable energy initiative.

We're for jobs. They're for no. The question is clear.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, the Auditor General also questioned their jobs claims. But he also noted that FIT subsidies are driving up the cost of power to make us one of the most expensive places in North America.

Let me read a quote: "If businesses can't count on a secure and inexpensive supply of electricity, they won't invest in Ontario." Premier, we agree with your very words. Yesterday, the CFIB reported the main cost pressure on Ontario businesses surveyed is energy.

Premier, will you admit that the FIT program is killing jobs and join us in putting an end to it today?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'd like to thank some of the "phantoms" in the province of Ontario for the investments they're making and the jobs they're producing. I'd like to thank CS Wind in Windsor for the 300 direct jobs and 400 indirect jobs that they're producing right now. I'd like to thank SunEdison in Newmarket for the 50 jobs and the 35 indirect jobs that they're producing right now. I'd like to thank KB Racking in Guelph and Mississauga. I'd like to thank OSM in Welland. I'd like to thank—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: —power in Newmarket. I'd like to thank SunRise Power Corp. for the work they're doing up in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes. I'd like to thank Enphase Energy, Highland Solar, Hybridyne, Essar Steel Algoma, Steel Tree Structures and countless more that are part of the 20,000 jobs, $27 billion worth of investment.

When is the party opposite going to stand up for jobs, stand up for investments and stand up—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, this week we've presented clear and compelling evidence that your job-killing program is an economic disaster. We can mention some names as well: Xstrata Copper in Timmins, which lost 670 jobs as they went to Quebec for cheaper power. Another example: The largest manufacturer in my riding was here in the gallery this week, and you heard for the first time of global adjustment, that million-dollar charge that now threatens those 250 jobs. You also heard that countries the world over are abandoning these crippling subsidies.

But Premier, you're in luck. We have a CARE package for you: Clean, Affordable, Reliable Energy. Premier, your CARE package is there. Will you support our bill and end the job-killing FIT program?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: You know, Speaker, in the Legislature they're consistent and they say no, but when they're back in their ridings it's a different tune, and sometimes it's hard to know which way the wind blows.

The MPP from Oxford said that the Samsung agreement would stay under a PC government. The MPP from Nipissing—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: You're a liar, Minister.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford will withdraw.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Withdraw.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: St. Thomas Times Journal, May 11, 2011. The MPP from Nipissing puts the solar panels on the city hall roof and puts the wind project outside the community. The MPP from Haldimand–Norfolk says, "The SunE Sky parks here in Norfolk represent a great opportunity to diversify our economy ... improving" the life of our—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question this morning is for the Premier. Over the last week, I've asked the government to account for the millions of public dollars that they have given away to companies that just aren't creating jobs. And over the last week, the Premier hasn't offered any answers whatsoever. For example, why did a $20-billion hedge fund with five staff get a $350,000 handout paid for by the people of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's becoming increasingly evident that the NDP don't support efforts to create jobs in the province of Ontario, don't support efforts to build our globe-leading financial services sector, don't support efforts to build our North America-leading auto sector.

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When you look at the investments we made some time ago when that auto sector was hanging on a thread, where were the NDP then? Mr. Speaker, 485,000 workers in this province depend on that auto sector; 485,000 jobs that would not be there today if we had listened to the NDP and not made those investments. Twenty billion dollars of investment in our economy is dependent on that auto sector. Today, if we had listened to them, our economy would be $20 billion—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What New Democrats don't support is the failing efforts of this Liberal government that just gives money to companies that ship jobs somewhere else.

New Food Classics got a $1-million handout and shut their doors within months. Silicon Knights got a $2.5-million handout and laid off 75% of their workforce. Navistar got a $30-million handout and shipped thousands of jobs south to Mexico.

The government says that they have agreements in place that are going to ensure that jobs are protected in these situations. I want to know if the Premier has gotten a single dime of any of this money back?

Hon. Brad Duguid: There was so much misinformation in that, I'm not even going to respond specifically to it.

But what I'll say is this: The opposition thinks that it's their job to run down Ontario's economy. I don't know where they get their economic advice from. I take my economic advice from the people who want to build this economy up, like the people at Avaya and Ciena, who recognize the talent and innovation of our workforce and are investing in Ottawa's high-tech sector; like the people at Toyota, who decided that Woodstock was the place to build their first North American electric vehicle; like the people at Goodrich, who decided that Oakville was the place to build their world-leading landing gear for the world's largest aircraft; like the people at Magna, whose plants in Aurora, Brampton, Concord and St. Thomas are providing key facilities for a world-leading economic entity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, this week, this minister insisted that money handed out to Navistar was clawed back, but we haven't found any evidence at all that this in fact was done, and the government is hiding the information in the contracts that they won't make public.

This public money comes from people who worked hard and who paid their fair share. Why is the government refusing to tell them how much they've given away and what the conditions were under which they were given it?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member asked the exact same question yesterday, and I gave her a very direct answer to that. She's basing her question on a freedom-of-information request that she sat on for weeks, if not months; that's outdated. The numbers are there; they're public. I said it yesterday. They've paid back $6 million.

I'll say it again for the member, because she put out a press release yesterday that was not correct: They've paid back $6 million. The investment that this government made and the investment that the federal government made helped preserve jobs in Chatham for almost 10 years, because this plant was going to close down in 2002. It's unfortunate they made the decision to move. At the same time, we've done what we said we were going to do. We've clawed back $6 million. We were able to preserve hundreds of jobs in Chatham for another 10 years—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is back to the Premier. For the people who make this province work every day, the situation is pretty hard to stomach. Their wages are falling, their jobs are at risk and the money that they send here is being handed out by the millions to companies that are laying them off. Does this make a lick of sense, Speaker?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The only thing that doesn't make a lick of sense in here are the continual questions coming from the NDP based on misinformation. Many of the questions they've asked this week on these issues are concerning companies that are working hard in this province, trying to make a go of it. On many of these occasions the money hasn't even flowed to them yet.

So let me say this: We're going to continue to work tirelessly to build up this economy. We're going to continue to work for the people of this province, to ensure we have the best-educated workforce. We're going to continue to invest in the infrastructure of this province, to ensure we have competitive infrastructure.

I would think that the NDP would be with us in this effort. It's obvious that they're not. We're on the side of workers—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The people who sent us here have a lot on the line, and we need to make some pretty smart decisions. We need to be doing a much, much better job than what this government has been doing.

The Premier's policy on no-strings-attached corporate tax cuts and on multi-million dollar handouts simply is not creating jobs. Now, he's already admitting that his corporate tax giveaways have not delivered. Will he adopt a plan that actually rewards the job creators in Ontario and links tax relief to creating jobs, to training and to investments in this province?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The leader of the NDP may think it's her job to continue to talk down our economy, but we're going to keep building it up.

But if she doesn't want to take our word for it, let's listen to a magazine like Forbes, a pretty well-respected business magazine. This is what they had to say. Forbes said Canada ranks number one as the best country for business. They said that's because of Ontario's reformed tax structure with the HST, which directly refutes what you just said.

Let's talk about Site Selection magazine. It ranked Ontario as the most competitive province in Canada for 2010-11—the most competitive province. Here's what they had to say: "When a province is creating more than half the new jobs for its nation, chances are it's a leader in competitiveness."

We're proud of the work we're doing. We're going to keep doing it, with or without the support of the NDP—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Forbes—well, the minister might cater to the people who hold Forbes subscriptions, but here are the facts for everyday people in Ontario. Wages are rising across Canada, but in Ontario, wages

are falling. Unemployment, too, in Ontario is higher than the national average. People in this province have a higher debt and are more worried about their jobs than anywhere else in the country. They look to their government for leadership, and when they see public dollars handed out to companies that are laying people off, they lose hope.

Isn't it time for a better strategy in Ontario, one that ensures that tax breaks go to real job creators and not the companies that are leaving Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm not sure how much confidence the member opposite has in the people of Ontario, but I think the people of Ontario are quite capable of reading magazines in this province. I think they're well-educated enough to understand what's going on in our business community, and I think they'd be very interested to know what the Financial Times of London had to say. They ranked Ontario as first in North America in foreign direct investment per capita, and second in absolute terms.

The member may refuse to take our word for it, Speaker, but these are pretty, pretty respected publications that I'm quoting today.

Look, Mr. Speaker, we've got a plan that's working. Companies confirm it, because they're investing here. We've got a plan that's working.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The numbers confirm it, because we've had over 300,000 jobs created in this province since the recession—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. A reminder to the member: When I say, "Answer," you have a wrap-up to do, and do so quickly.

New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: The $140-million deal that Ornge executives cooked up is under criminal investigation. The money that paid for that deal was raised in a public offering that featured the credentials of one of its executives, Mr. Rick Potter. The minister knows that Mr. Potter lied about those credentials; she knows he was intimately involved in cooking up that deal.

Front-line staff, the paramedics, pilots at Ornge know Mr. Potter's record and lost confidence in him long ago. The minister said she would fire any of her staff who did what Mr. Potter would do. Yet, rather than fire Mr. Potter, last night the minister and her new leadership—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Frank Klees: —gave Mr. Potter a soft landing into another job at Ornge.

I ask the minister to explain this: How can she justify holding on to her job with such a blatant—

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I also remind this member to please wrap up as quickly as possible. When I say stop, we stop.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. This is, of course, an operational issue that human resource people in an organization make. My job is to make sure that there is strong leadership in place. I have accomplished that. There is new and very strong, credible leadership in place at Ornge. They will make decisions related to personnel in that organization.

I can assure you, Speaker, that I do not make decisions about personnel within the organizations—the many organizations, the hundreds of organizations—that the Ministry of Health is responsible for funding. We have made important changes at Ornge and those people are doing their job.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary question?

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, Speaker, given those circumstances, the minister should take it upon herself to make those decisions if her leadership doesn't have the wisdom to do so.

Here is the new job that Mr. Potter has been given: Entrench the plan that he and his friend Dr. Mazza cooked up, a plan that was blindly and irresponsibly endorsed by the Management Board of this government and nurtured along by the current Minister of Health.

Here's the plan: Start a new aviation business; take contracts away from experienced aviation companies that have been delivering excellent service to the province of Ontario for two decades; force those companies out of business; lower standards of operation; reduce staffing levels and to heck with patient care and crew safety.

So I want to ask the minister this: If she doesn't have the capacity to get the job done and show leadership, why doesn't she step aside and let someone—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Minister of Health?

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the member opposite has had no shortage of advice to offer when it comes to the operations of Ornge. He actually thinks the minister should decide what planes fly, what helicopters fly, what the qualifications of paramedics are, who should work and what their job should be. I just reject that definition of what the responsibility of the minister is.

My job is to put in place strong leadership and let them do their job. My job is to make sure that we have the oversight that we need to ensure that taxpayers are getting best value for their money and patients are getting the highest quality care. If you look at the record that I have led, we have done all of those things. The member

opposite has different priorities. My priority is to get care to the patients—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question?

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^me^ France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président. Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

Every day this week I've asked the Premier questions about the fact that his senior staff in his office were told about what was going on at Ornge but they didn't do anything. The Premier hasn't answered a single question as of yet.

Will the Premier break his silence and tell this Legislature about his office's knowledge of Ornge's tangled web of for-profit companies and executive perks?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for that. The briefing that the member opposite has referred to has been in the public domain for quite a while now. There are no secrets contained in that.

The fact is that we have taken decisive action in the ministry. The Auditor General tried repeatedly to get answers to questions that they thought the people of Ontario were entitled to receive. When the former leadership at Ornge refused to share that information we had to take very strong actions.

We have replaced the board. We have a new interim CEO. We sent in a forensic audit team that in fact has led to an OPP investigation. We are now focused on moving forward. The people of this province deserve access to very high quality air ambulance care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^me^ France Gélinas: Back to the Premier: Mr. Speaker, I tried to ask what I think are important questions, and I asked them in a respectful way. But I can't even get the Premier to look at me when I talk to him, and I can certainly not get him to answer any questions.

The facts are straightforward. This written document was given to his top adviser. It was given to Jamison Steeve.

Instead of hiding behind the health minister, will the Premier step up and explain to families why his office did not act when they found out what was going on at Ornge? We deserve a word from our Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased that the Premier has confidence in me to do my job, and that job is to make sure that we move forward, making the changes at Ornge that need to be made.

I can tell you that front-line staff are seeing the changes that are happening. They are very pleased with the change in leadership. They are pleased with the decisions that this government has made.

Our focus is on patient safety. Our focus is on addressing the issues that are being raised by the Auditor General and others, Speaker.

We are winding down the for-profit entities that were created under the former leadership. We have taken the appropriate steps, and we will continue to act in the interest of the people of this province.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. These are tough economic times. We're dealing with a mounting public deficit. We've got the public debt to retire. Indeed, this is the challenge of our times here in Ontario.

Minister, yesterday, the Premier raised the issue of an MPP pay freeze. What's happening with respect to the MPP pay raise or pay freeze?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank the member from Willowdale for asking this question. He absolutely is correct. We are facing a $16-billion deficit, and we need to face this deficit head on. This will require real leadership for us to demonstrate—not only to face the challenge but at the same time protect our key priorities as well.

I just want to say that the Premier said yesterday that it's important that we continue to lead by example. We are asking people to do some things that are not easy, especially our public sector partners. That's why it is critical that we lead by example, so we will be asking all MPPs, once again, to freeze salaries for an additional two years. This means that, for five years, Ontario's MPPs will not have any salary increases.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Here's what my constituents in Willowdale are concerned about. They have read about the 5% reduction in the OPS. They've read about another 2% reduction over the next two years. They've read about cutting the number of service agencies in Ontario by some 5%, meaning some 14 fewer agencies.

Minister, what they want to know is, allowing for those reductions—staff reductions and agency reductions—what's our plan to continue to maintain the quality of our core services in Ontario, combined with those reductions?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member from Willowdale again for asking this question. Our government is absolutely committed to balancing the budget by 2017-18. We have committed to reducing the size of the Ontario public service by 5%, and we are on track on that as well by the end of March this year, and a further 2% decrease in the next two years. As the member said, we are cutting the number of key agencies by 5%. But we are making investments in the programs that we feel are important to Ontarians, like education and health care.

In these challenging economic times, we must all work together to ensure that Ontarians continue to receive the quality services they have come to expect.

We will continue to lead by example in asking all MPPs in the House to freeze their salaries for an additional two years.

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AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is to the Premier.

The galleries are full today; people are observing question period. I believe that one of the reasons there is so much cynicism about the political process is because they have observed a Premier who has refused to engage in the debate that relates to one of the biggest scandals that has ever hit this province. For the Premier not to stand in his place and respect members of the opposition who put specific questions to him about this important issue is an insult to the members of the opposition and it is an insult to the people of this province.

I would just ask him one more time: Would he at least stand in his place, would he at least look at the person who's asking him a question, would he have say—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Another reminder that when I ask you to be seated, you do so—in particular the questioners or the people giving the answers: When I ask you to be seated, you be seated, please.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'm delighted to take the question.

I want to begin by saying that I draw a distinction between the interests being expressed by my colleagues in opposition and our responsibility owed to the greater public interest. I think that's an important distinction for us to draw.

There is a political interest over there; they are pursuing that. That is their option to do so and, in some ways, I would also argue it is their responsibility. But on this side of the House, our responsibility is to the greater public interest. What does the public demand of us in these circumstances, Speaker? The public demands of us to act responsibly.

The Minister of Health sent in a team of forensic accountants. Given the results of that investigation, she turned it over to the OPP. She's co-operating fully with the provincial auditor. That's the way to act responsibly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you very much.

Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Back to the Premier: Here's what the public do not understand. Why does the government have to be dragged, kicking and screaming, into striking a committee that would only help to get to the truth about this scandal and would allow front-line staff to come forward and tell their story about how to restore confidence in our air ambulance service—a committee that would allow us to establish who knew what, when, and who was responsible for the actions taken?

The minister and the Premier may want to avoid the scrutiny of this committee, but we on this side and the public want that scrutiny. That's why we tabled our motion yesterday that will force a debate and express the urgency of striking that committee.

Will the Premier support striking that committee so that we can get to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague raises an important issue. I think we're all looking for a foundation of objective, non-partisan, reliable information.

First of all, we've asked the police to conduct an investigation, and we look forward to the results of that objective investigation. The provincial auditor is looking into this matter as well, and we look forward to the results of that objective, non-partisan, arm's-length investigation.

Beyond that, Speaker, my House leader tells us that this is a subject that is going to come before a parliamentary committee: public accounts. That's one committee there. The minister is also going to be introducing legislation which we hope will become the subject of a committee hearing in this House. That's the second committee.

So we have an OPP investigation; we have an auditor looking into this; we have a public accounts committee; and we have a parliamentary committee looking into the bill itself. It seems to me we're going a long way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Start the clock.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will share with the House that somebody wrote me an email and said, "Watch for the farmer's cycle; pay attention to the moon." I don't know what that meant.

All I have to say is I would appreciate it—references have been made to our gallery. They do go away with thoughts in their minds—two of them, probably: whether or not I can do my job and whether or not you are doing yours. I hope we would all maintain the civility that I've asked for.

New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^me^ France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

I would like to preface my question by reminding our Premier, as well as everybody in this House, that today is Women's Day and maybe when a woman asks a question she can get an answer from the Premier.

My question is simple, Premier: Can you tell this Legislative Assembly what you know about Ornge, and when did you find out?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I think it is important that we give some recognition to the important role that women have played in all our lives and in this House.

And I think we're all very lucky to have a very strong Minister of Health in Deb Matthews, serving all Ontarians.

Again, I draw a distinction between the political interests being advanced by the opposition and the responsibility we owe to the greater public interest. In addition to those independent, objective assessments that I've talked about—and I want to make it perfectly clear: I have not said that we should reject the committee being put forward by the opposition; I'm saying that we have a number of investigations under way. We should allow for the completion of those.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^me^ France Gélinas: Back to the Premier: I got the Premier to speak but not to answer, so let's try it again.

The right to know, Premier, is also in the public interest, and what I'm asking you right now is that—your top adviser, Jamison Steeve, had the document 14 months ago. He knew of the tangled web. I am absolutely positive that a million red flags went up when he saw this.

What I'm asking you is: What did you know and when did you find out?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, again, I draw a distinction between the political interests being advanced by my honourable colleague and what we owe the public.

Now, as a matter of courtesy, I don't provide advice with respect to the kinds of questions that my colleagues opposite put to me—although, of course, they have an interest in how I answer those questions—but I think we might want to reciprocate in that regard. They put the questions in the best way they see fit, and I do the same with respect to the answers.

With respect to this particular answer, I think what we owe Ontarians is to ensure that we are on top of this, that we are bringing in the necessary oversight, that we're allowing the police to do their work, that we're allowing the auditor's office to do its work, that we put in place new rules by means of new legislation which will further tighten up the oversight that we bring to a very important public responsibility.

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SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Mike Colle: A question to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: Today I'm going to be celebrating my aunt's 107th birthday.

Interjection: Going to have some pasta?

Mr. Mike Colle: It's pasta fagioli; that's the key.

It's just that she was able to stay in her home—she lived in Etobicoke and Mississauga—up until a of couple months ago. That is an amazing thing for a senior who has worked her whole life to stay with her family.

She now is in a long-term-care facility in Mississauga, and when I go to see her today, I'm sure she's going to ask me, "What are you in government doing to help seniors," like her, "stay in their homes?"

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think all of us are inspired by someone like Luigina Grimaldi, 107 years young, the aunt of the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. She inspires us, because we need to do more to support people to stay in their own homes as long as possible, and that is what our action plan is all about: providing more supports at home and in the community.

One of the things we are moving forward with is bringing back house calls for the people of Ontario, so that people who have difficulty getting to appointments will actually have those health care professionals come to their homes. It won't just be doctors; it will be other health care providers like occupational therapists, nurses and others who can help support people, because home is where we all want to be. Home is where we want to be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, Minister of Health. I just wanted to say that the house call program has really been received very positively by a lot of seniors, certainly in my riding and I'm sure in ridings right across Ontario, because they feel, as seniors, that sometimes, especially in Ontario's winter months, they can't get out to see a doctor. Many of them, as they get older, can't drive. So making that house call available is really something that they think will be of great benefit. Can you just give our seniors an idea of how the house call by doctors program will work?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a great question. A few months ago, I went on a house call visit with Dr. Mark Nowaczynski here in Toronto. We visited an 83-year-old woman who would have been in long-term care, had it not been for the care that Dr. Mark and his team of people were able to provide her in her own home. That's where she wants to be, with her family in her community.

Speaker, it's better for patients; it's also better for the system. We know that long-term care costs about $150 a day; a hospital is up to $1,000 a day. Keeping someone in their own home is a far more cost-effective way to care for people as they age. So it's better patient care, and it's better value for taxpayers.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question today is for the Minister of Energy. I am joined today by dozens and dozens of Ontarians who have made the trek to Queen's Park, and later this afternoon, I look forward to welcoming busloads of additional people who are here today. They have travelled from all corners of Ontario to watch you, Minister, and all of us, as we vote for a moratorium

on industrial wind turbines until real health and environmental studies are done.

Folks from across Ontario were heartened by all Liberals, just two days ago—all Liberals, just two days ago—who said they supported studies, consultations and local decision-making. Minister, will you prove the Liberal talking points weren't just crass politics by supporting my call for a moratorium until third party health—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Energy?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I just want to make sure that we're all clear: We stand for clean air; they stand for coal. We stand for clean energy; they oppose it. We stand for clean energy jobs; they don't. We stand for the health studies and the health advice from the medical officers of health of both Ontario and Canada, and countless other studies out there that make it clear that it is safe and that we've taken the appropriate steps. I just want to make sure that we're all very clear in here.

When I travel through rural Ontario, I see a heck of a lot of farmers and communities participating in the clean energy, green energy, clean air agenda that my friend opposite opposes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I am embarrassed for all the good folks who have travelled to Toronto today. That was disgusting.

Just this week, Minister, Premier McGuinty said that it is "our shared responsibility at all times to respect the expressed will of our" municipalities. Ontario MPPs have received a record-breaking 1,700 emails in support of my moratorium. Municipalities throughout Ontario have also passed resolutions supporting a moratorium and studies.

Minister, I ask again: Will you do the honourable thing and recognize the will of thousands and thousands of people who have travelled to Queen's Park today, signed petitions and sent emails to all of us here in this House supporting my moratorium? Will you do the honourable thing?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We've made it very clear that we're going to build on the strengths of the green energy review through our Green Energy Act, through our review. We've been listening very carefully to communities, to municipalities, to organizations both rural and urban, and we're going to come out with a strengthened program very soon to make sure we continue to clean up the air, continue to grow jobs in our economy and continue to make sure that Ontarians, rural and urban, can participate in the green energy economy.

But it's tough sometimes when the members in here, on the other side of the House, oppose green energy, but back in their ridings they support green energy; when the members opposite, on so many issues, have a morning press conference that says no to green jobs, and this afternoon they're having a press conference that wants to unlock green jobs; when they oppose subsidies, and they support subsidies for racetracks; when they like the HST and then they say no. Where do you stand?

TEACHERS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Why won't the Premier sit down face to face with teachers to discuss issues he's so eager to talk about on YouTube?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just want to take this opportunity to say how proud I am of Ontario teachers and of the partnership that we've entered into with Ontario teachers.

The fact of the matter is, it's one thing for us in government to come up with new ideas, to provide more funding, and to try to improve the quality of the curriculum and the education that we provide our teachers. But at the end of the day, it's the men and women who work inside those classrooms every single day who are making such a powerful difference in the lives of our children and our young people. They are single-handedly building a brighter future for all of us.

I have every confidence that we will maintain the strength of our partnership. We will find a way forward together. We will continue to ensure that Ontario schools are the best in the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Tough times require real leadership. The Premier knows, or should know, that locking yourself in your office with the blinds down, making videos on YouTube, isn't leadership. It's exactly the sort of tactic he used to disparage.

He just spoke glowingly of teachers. He's asking them to take a hit. Why can't he look them in the eye?

1130

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There may have been a Premier who has visited as many schools as I have, but I'm not aware of such an individual. There may have been another Premier who has created so many opportunities to celebrate Ontario teachers, but I'm not aware of such an individual. There may have been a government that has so dramatically increased funding for publicly funded schools in Ontario, but I'm not aware of one either, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am trying to get the shouting back and forth down. Some members on both sides just want to yell, and I would like that to stop, please.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Thanks, Speaker. We've come up against a challenge at this point in our history. The global economy has slowed. The outlook is uncertain. We are confronted with a significant deficit here in Ontario. So I am inviting our teachers, our doctors, MPPs and all our public sector partners to participate in being some part of the solution as we tackle this deficit and make sure we have the continued capacity to support, among other things, great schools.

VIOLENCE AGAINST ABORIGINAL WOMEN

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Today is International Women's Day, and I'd like to ask a question about the rate of violence against aboriginal women. It's a problem that must be addressed.

In recent years, the Native Women's Association of Canada, Amnesty International and other human rights organizations are sounding the alarm against the number of women in Canada who are missing and have been murdered. These organizations have urged the United Nations to investigate what the federal government is doing; its inaction. The United Nations, in December, asked for an inquiry procedure through the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination of Women, and we do have commitments. The national chief has indicated that there are Premiers, territorial leaders and provincial ministers all prepared, but where is our federal government? It's clear they have a responsibility to develop a nationwide strategy.

So my question, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister is: Please tell me what we're doing to make a difference with the federal government—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank the member for Etobicoke Centre for raising this important issue. I think everyone in this House can agree that it is completely unacceptable that, across Canada, the rate of violence against aboriginal women is triple that of non-aboriginal women and the rate of spousal homicide for aboriginal women is eight times greater than for non-aboriginal women. It's a completely unsupportable and unacceptable statistic.

As chair of the aboriginal affairs working group, which is the national working group of ministers responsible across the country, we've been calling on the federal government to take action on the issue of ending violence against aboriginal women. This was one of the three identified priorities on which we're going to be focusing.

The minister responsible for women's issues is going to speak, and she is going to talk about some of the specific initiatives that we've been taking. But the issue of the 500 missing and murdered aboriginal women is something that ministries need to work collaboratively on, and we need to work with community groups.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you, Minister. It's nice to know that we are actually urging the federal government to move forward on a national strategy. But in the meantime, the First Nations themselves have identified that the province has a responsibility as well. So, what are the things that we are doing in the interim to be able to help initially, and ultimately to be able to work with that federal government when that national strategy is developed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very proud to lead, with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the work to make sure that there is a coordinated response from ministries across Ontario to address the recommendations and the strategic framework to end violence against aboriginal women.

We've established a joint working group on violence against aboriginal women. It brings together 10 different ministries and five aboriginal organizations to work collectively to better prevent violence against aboriginal women and to provide better support to the victims. We've done some great work together. We've started a program called Kanawayhitowin, which helps raise awareness about the signs of abuse so that friends, neighbours and families know what to do. We've begun a pilot project for an aboriginal women's helpline. We are providing support to women in communities.

We're doing our part, but we need a strong federal partner to make the difference in the lives of women—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Premier. Quebec's Premier took the time to attend the prospectors and developers' convention this week in Toronto. He outlined Plan Nord, a comprehensive 25-year plan that allocates $85 billion to develop the resources, people and opportunities for the people of northern Quebec. Some 30,000 people from all around the world attended this conference. Every hotel room in the city is booked this week. Premier, you didn't even bother to show up. Why is it that the Premier of Quebec recognizes the importance of mining, but you don't?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Well, thank you, Premier, for allowing me the opportunity to congratulate the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada for hosting another incredible success story. Do you know what? They highlighted Ontario. In almost every delegation I went to, everybody spoke about the wonder that is Ontario when it comes to mineral development and mineral exploration. There is absolutely no question about it: Ontario is the choice for so many people around the world to invest money, to explore, to develop, to bring out the natural resources from underground so that everyone benefits from the incredible, incredible thing that is Ontario.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Supplementary.

Mr. Norm Miller: Speaker, I have no idea what the minister just blabbered on about, but I would like to redirect my question back to the Premier.

Premier, your approach to mining is sending mixed signals. This week, in the middle of the prospectors' con-

vention, you removed 23,000 square kilometres of northwestern Ontario from exploration. When the De Beers diamond mine was about to open, you jacked up their tax rate. Mining companies are leaving Ontario because of your high energy cost. You are doing precious little, other than issue press releases, to help get the Ring of Fire discovery to an active mine. It's no wonder that mining companies, that ranked Ontario as sixth in the world in 2003, now rank us as 25th.

Premier, how can you call Ontario open for business based on your—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, it amazes me that the critic for the Progressive Conservatives would say that supporting the Ontario mining industry is blabbering. Well, let me blabber some more. We have 246 exploration companies exploring in Ontario; more than in Quebec. We have a value in exploration of $11 billion; more than in Quebec. We have exploration spending of $1.2 billion; more than Quebec. We have 27 metal mines; more than Quebec. That's why Ontario is the choice destination for exploration and development in the mineral industry, and I'm proud of that.

I'm ashamed of that member over—

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo on a point of order.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'd like to introduce Mr. Gerald Van Decker from Kitchener, the president and CEO of Renewability Energy Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister on a point of order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Speaker, on a point of privilege, I missed out yesterday, and I'd like to take the opportunity to introduce a fourth-year student of politics and history from U of T. Welcome to the public gallery, Mr. Adrian Zita-Bennett.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Everyone be seated, please.

I will be making a statement on this very thing in the near future.

Since there are no deferred votes, this House stands adjourned—while this is happening, the members are supposed to be seated.

This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to introduce, in the gallery, my legislative intern. His name is Patrick DeRochie and he is part of the Ontario Legislature internship program. I will say here that he was the gentleman who crafted my soon-to-be-presented private member's bill.

Mr. Michael Coteau: It's my pleasure today to welcome to the Legislative Assembly several members of the Don Valley East Armenian community. Today, we're joined by Armenian National Committee of Toronto chairman Hagop Tchakmakian; the Armenian National Committee of Toronto administrator, Araz Hasserjian; the Armenian National Committee of Toronto executive, Raffi Sarkissian; the Homenetmen Athletic Council executive, Paul Ternamian; and the Bolsahay Cultural Association of Toronto's representatives, Murat Nisan and Abraham Celikoz.

Also, we're joined by Hratch Aynedjian, who, by the way, is also an assistant for one of our ministers. Welcome very much to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to acknowledge a number of visitors that are touring the Legislature today. I had the pleasure of being with them a few minutes ago at the Royal York. They're winners of the Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year award.

Alysha Dykstra, from Guelph; Madelaine Frank, from Whitby; Sarah Lewis, from Windsor; Rebecca Marsh, from Burlington; Kalem McSween, from Toronto; Stephanie Murchison, from Sarnia–Lambton; Mackenzie Oliver, from Barrie; Breanna Pede, from Sarnia–Lambton; Andrew Sigmaringam, from Toronto; Stephanie Simmons, from London; Isabelle Wilson, from Kincardine; and River Wong, from Thornhill. They'll all be joining us later in the Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Soo Wong: Today I would like to introduce one of my young constituents, Caitlin Wong, from my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt; a daughter of Natalie Wong, one of my assistants in the constituency office. Caitlin is a great young student in grade 4 at Bridlewood public school who loves to be active. She's an avid tennis player, and just one week ago her school won the conference championship in volleyball. Please join me to welcome Caitlin and her mother, Natalie, to the Legislature.

Mr. Toby Barrett: We welcome Haldimand and Norfolk constituents, here by bus—they're coming into the visitors' gallery now—including Ernie King, Stephana Johnston and others too numerous to mention, here to support legislating a moratorium on further industrial wind power.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery the committee on taxation from the Parliament of Sweden, led by committee chairman Mr. Henrik Von Sydow. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests to the Legislature today. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Todd Smith: Tomorrow, Bancroft Light and Power will be put into receivership by this government.

It's a sad story. There are only a few members of the House who know this story, actually, and one of them is the Minister of Energy.

Four years ago, Infrastructure Ontario gave a loan to Bancroft Light and Power. The money was used to put two new water power generators into a facility that had operated in Bancroft for over 100 years. They did this, believing that a workable RESOP or a FIT contract would be available to them. Unfortunately, it wasn't; they were denied. As has so often been the case with this government, a group of Ontario residents kept up their end of the bargain, and this government, unfortunately, has left them out in the cold.

The icing was on the cake, though, for the town of Bancroft. It came last week at the Rural Ontario Municipal Association conference here in Toronto when the Minister of Energy, after the mayor had camped out at his door, could barely give her the time of day. Considering the $2-million commitment made by the Infrastructure Ontario group in this project, you'd think that the government would put a real effort into ensuring that a renewable energy investment wouldn't go ignored. But Don Drummond and many others have documented, in damning terms, this government's history with mismanaging money.

Mr. Speaker, apparently you can put up unreliable, expensive wind turbines in Prince Edward county but you can't put a reliable and proven renewable-energy water power project on the York River in Bancroft, and that's sad.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: The Ontario horse racing and breeding industry employs 60,000 people, more than 31,000 full-time, including trainers, grooms, feed store owners, feed growers, barn crews and concession staff, paying $1.5 billion a year in wages. Workers in the racing community pay taxes and contribute to our economy. Tomorrow, they could be on the welfare and unemployment lines.

One writer to me quoted Minister Duncan, "If it's not a subsidy, then why do they need it?"—to which he replied, "My paycheque is not a subsidy, but I really need it." Another said, "I know one thing: the Liberals are sure waking up a lot of sleeping votes. Scare enough horses and you'll get a stampede."

Cripple the rural community and the economy, and $2 billion in horse racing and breeding industry expenditures will disappear in primarily rural and agricultural communities. Any change to this agreement should be negotiated because it could virtually end the successful revenue stream, costing the government $1.1 billion a year.

Speaker, the horse racing industry revenue is not—I repeat, not—a subsidy. It is a revenue-sharing partnership with the OLG, providing the government with revenue of more than $1 billion a year towards funding health care and education. This agreement is not a secretive subsidy for just a few wealthy horse owners; it was reached because Ontarians mostly voted that they did not want slot machines.

Don't throw out the baby with the bathwater.

VERONICA PENNY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Speaker. It's great to see you in the chair.

I rise today to recognize the Ottawa Citizen Regional Spelling Bee champion, Veronica Penny, from my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Veronica is a home-schooled student from Rockland. She won the regional spelling bee held at the National Gallery in Ottawa this past weekend. Her championship word was "ascetic." Veronica will next compete in this year's Postmedia/Canspell National Spelling Bee in Toronto later this month.

Let me spell out this incredible accomplishment: About 18,000 students from 71 schools competed to reach Sunday's regional final. From that group, 50 students competed through 13 rounds. Needless to say, Veronica had an impressive performance, successfully defending her regional title. From there, she'll try to earn her fourth trip to the Scripps National Spelling Bee in Washington, DC.

This young woman has been called a spelling marvel. She's made her family very, very proud, and as one of Canada's top young spellers, she has made Rockland, Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and député/MPP Grant Crack very proud as well.

Way to go, Veronica. Keep up the good work and good luck in Toronto. We'll see you later this month.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my absolute pleasure today to stand in this House to support my colleague from Huron–Bruce, Lisa Thompson, in her call for this McGuinty Liberal government to place a moratorium on further wind developments until appropriate studies have been in place and completed.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, representing a large suburban rural riding that is on its way to being assaulted by this McGuinty Liberal government, that we expect in our rural communities to have locally-based decision-making restored to our communities. We expect that that subsidy for the FIT program is going to be ripped up so that our seniors and our small businesses don't have to continue to subsidize their crazy experiments with energy. And we know that there have been lots of complaints from our communities right across Ontario that there may be health and environmental effects because of this energy scheme of Dalton McGuinty.

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That's why the Ontario PC caucus will stand firmly behind the member from Huron–Bruce, and we're

challenging other members from rural communities in this chamber to do the right thing. If you don't vote for this motion today, you'll be opposed to rural Ontario. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Cindy Forster: I rise today to recognize and congratulate women, on International Women's Day, for their achievements, in spite of the barriers they encounter daily. Women represent more than 50% of the population; however, inequities still exist at all income levels, regardless that women are more likely to be university graduates. The Ontario Legislature is a prime example, with only 29% of MPPs being women.

Equality will only be achieved when there's equal access to well-paid jobs in every sector at every level. Women continue to be paid 30% to 40% less than their male counterparts in non-union middle- and low-income workplaces.

Women, and in particular senior women and single-parent-family women, are often the poorest in our province. The McGuinty government could do more to improve the lives of Ontario women by amending the Ontario Labour Relations Act to make unionizing easier through card-based certification for all, but specifically women in female-dominated industries, like they did for the male-dominated construction industry; by ensuring child care services in Ontario are adequately funded; by building more affordable housing to reduce the high percentage of income spent; by raising the minimum wage; and by adequately funding training programs for the unemployed and the underemployed.

I am honoured to be here today as an MPP in the NDP caucus, which has 41% women.

HRANT DINK

Mr. Michael Coteau: I rise today on a very serious matter. The date January 19 this year marked the fifth anniversary of the assassination of Turkish Armenian journalist Hrant Dink. Hrant Dink was an internationally respected journalist, intellectual, and prominent Armenian voice in Turkey. He is most famously recognized as the editor-in-chief for the Turkish Armenian newspaper AGOS.

During his distinguished career, Mr. Dink was outspoken against the state, pointing out the fact that the Ottoman Empire committed genocide against the Armenian population in 1915, which resulted in the deaths of 1.5 million Armenians. Because he spoke truth to power, Dink was arrested multiple times. In 2007, Dink was assassinated outside of the AGOS newspaper office by a 17-year-old ultra-nationalist.

Nearly five years later, the trial of his murderer was brought to a close this January. While the youth was convicted to a life sentence in June 2011, many in the Armenian community continue to raise questions about the original investigation.

I stand alongside the Armenian community in my riding of Don Valley East, throughout Ontario and abroad, as they continue to commemorate Dink's life. Together, let us stand with the Armenian community. We stand against genocide. We stand in support of freedom of speech for all, especially journalists, whose contributions to democracy are invaluable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

YOUTH OFFENDER FACILITY

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It saddens me to stand in the chamber today and address the closing of beds at Brookside Youth Centre in Cobourg. This loss would be bad enough, Mr. Speaker, were it not for the knowledge that over the past five years, the current government has added four new youth detention facilities and expanded one other, all of them in Liberal-held ridings. At the same time, it has closed jails throughout rural Ontario and is now closing a youth detention facility in a Conservative riding in southwestern Ontario, cutting the facility in my riding in half and taking the hatchet just as viciously to the facility in the NDP-held riding of Nickel Belt.

It is a small wonder why this province is so far in debt. For purely partisan reasons, the government has spent millions of dollars building new facilities in Liberal-held ridings, only to then spend another small fortune paying severances to the men and women working in the existing secure-custody facilities. Why did the government build new facilities when they knew that the capacity of other facilities like Brookside was still available?

Mr. Speaker, this is unacceptable, and I stand here today on behalf of those individuals who are losing their jobs at Brookside because of this partisan government.

PARLEMENT JEUNESSE FRANCOPHONE DE L'ONTARIO

M. Bob Delaney: Merci, monsieur le Président. Cette semaine, l'Assemblée législative accueille les jeunes participants du Parlement jeunesse, qui en est déjà à sa sixième édition. Cette activité annuelle a été initiée en 2007 par Jean-Marc Lalonde, l'ex-député de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell et l'ancien président de l'Assemblée des parlementaires de la francophonie pour l'Ontario.

Le Parlement jeunesse permet à nos étudiants et étudiantes francophones de 11e et 12e année de venir nous rendre visite ici, à Queen's Park. Ainsi, ils pourront nous observer, nous, les députés élus à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario, afin de mieux cerner nos rôles et responsabilités.

Ces jeunes auront par la suite l'occasion de recréer ce dont ils seront témoins aujourd'hui, incluant le travail des députés, des pages, des greffiers et des journalistes. Ils pourront aussi discuter avec les députés francophones dans le cadre d'une rencontre sociale.

Aujourd'hui, je tiens donc à souligner le travail du ministère de l'Éducation, de la Fédération de la jeunesse franco-ontarienne et du député de Glengarry–Prescott–

Russell, Grant Crack, pour leur engagement soutenu à la communauté franco-ontarienne.

Je sais donc que tout le monde ici se joint à moi pour souhaiter la bienvenue à tous les étudiants et étudiantes présents aujourd'hui.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, I've been through Mr. McGuinty's Drummond report many times, and it appears Mr. Drummond has failed to mention the low-hanging fruit that's costing Ontario billions: the Green Energy Act. He also failed to address the Samsung fiasco. As one of my constituents wrote me, "Think that this alone could almost solve the deficit."

My constituents—many are here today—want to know who directed this extreme oversight: 700 pages, not a word about industrial wind turbines.

Parker Gallant, vice-president of Wind Concerns Ontario, has noticed as well that the Drummond report is disappointingly low-key on the massive amount of waste going on in Ontario's renewable energy sector. How can this be, after Ontario Auditor General Jim McCarter's devastating report on the subject just a few months ago?

A February 25 editorial in the Toronto Sun sums up the shortfall nicely: "By contrast, the Drummond report on electricity and green energy often reads as if it was written by government bureaucrats defending the indefensible."

This government owes an answer to the people of this province who are being adversely affected by this government's knee-jerk decisions. There are families in my riding, Speaker, who are paying mortgages and they're also renting safe houses to escape the horrors of windmills.

Drummond is a Liberal government commissioned report. Taxpayers funded McGuinty's Drummond report. They deserve an accounting on this, Speaker.

MEMBER FOR NIAGARA FALLS

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Mississauga–Streetsville on a point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, on a point of order: May I seek unanimous consent for the member for Niagara Falls to be present in the House in uniform for the presentation of his ballot item?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed? Agreed.

I'm being asked to let everyone know it's a costume of Isaac Brock, so that you fully understand.

Interjection: Make sure he leaves the horse at home.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Okay. Consent has been granted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SUPPLY ACT, 2012
LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2012

Mr. Bradley, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012 / Projet de loi 46, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2012.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Agreed? Agreed.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for a short statement.

Hon. James J. Bradley: No statement.

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MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Do we have agreement? Agreed.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that during consideration of private members' public business this afternoon, in the event that Bill 35, An Act to proclaim October 13 in each year as Major-General Sir Isaac Brock Day in Ontario, receives second reading, the order for third reading shall immediately be called and the question put immediately without debate or amendment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE DE LA FEMME

Hon. James J. Bradley: I believe we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak in recognition of International Women's Day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: It's my pleasure to rise today to mark International Women's Day. I'm so proud to celebrate the tremendous strides and achievements made by women around the globe and right here at home.

Strong women mean a strong Ontario. As minister responsible for women's issues, it gives me great pride to speak to what women in our province have accomplished. As we make this progress, we create a brighter

future for women and for Ontario. Agnes Macphail, the first female member of Parliament in Canada, said, "I want for myself what I want for other women: absolute equality."

La Journée internationale de la femme nous rappelle que nous devons toujours remettre en question et transformer les attitudes, voire la culture, qui perpétuent l'inégalité des femmes.

International Women's Day reminds us that we must keep our focus on challenging and changing the attitudes—the culture—that perpetuates women's inequality.

Canadian women have always been pioneers in the quest for equality. From getting the vote in 1916 to being defined as "persons" in 1928, bit by bit, strong women have worked to change the culture. But almost 100 years later, there is still more to be done.

The TDSB recently hosted a conference for girls in Regent Park called Sister 2 Sister. One of the sessions was called, "I Don't Need a Prince to Rescue Me." What a wonderful message that sends to young women and what a powerful statement as to the progress that women have made over the past 100-plus years.

Today, during International Women's Week, it's important to look at how far we've come. But, Mr. Speaker, it's also important to reflect on how much more work there is to be done.

Les femmes gagnent en moyenne 30 % de moins que les hommes du même niveau de scolarité, et les hommes sont plus de deux fois plus susceptibles d'occuper un poste de cadre supérieur.

On average, women earn 30% less than equally educated men, and men are more than twice as likely to hold senior management positions. That's why it's so important that girls today have strong women as role models.

I was very proud to be here in the Ontario Legislature when the Order of Ontario was recently awarded; to many, but on that day in particular, to 11 exceptional, unique and inspiring women who were recognized. These women demonstrate the breadth and depth of what women in our society have accomplished and continue to accomplish.

Nathalie Des Rosiers leads the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and works tirelessly to ensure that victims of child sexual abuse get compensation for their injuries, amongst many other endeavours.

Dr. Sandra Black is an internationally recognized cognitive neurologist and the driving force behind the Ontario stroke system, which she designed to improve stroke care, from prevention to rehabilitation and reintegration.

The Order of Ontario also recognized Linda Schuyler of Toronto, co-creator and executive producer of the award-winning TV show Degrassi.

I'm so proud, Speaker, to live in a province where young girls can look to women like Nathalie, Sandra, Linda and so many others to see examples of powerful, successful women who are making a mark in the world in such diverse arenas.

Monsieur le Président, notre gouvernement a déployé des efforts inlassables pour habiliter les femmes.

Mr. Speaker, our government has worked hard to empower women with programs like full-day kindergarten, child care investments, the poverty reduction strategy, increases to the Ontario child benefit and training for low-income women in the skilled trades. We're making a tangible difference in the lives of women in this province.

As someone who has fought hard for women's dignity and equality for many, many years, I've seen first-hand the progress women are making. Women are leaving their mark in business, in the arts, in education, in law, in health care. Women are mothers who work both inside and outside of the home. They are entrepreneurs and community activists. Women celebrate in community. We must celebrate their diversity, and today of all days is a day to acknowledge many of the important women who have played roles in our province, in our country and in our lives.

So, Speaker, on International Women's Day, let me say thank you to some important women in my life: to my mother, who supports me; to my sisters, who are always there; and to many of the women who went before, grandmothers who were strong and fought against all of the odds to make sure that their grandchildren could have the future that they wanted. On International Women's Day, let's hope nothing less for all the grandchildren and all the grandmothers and all the mothers and all the sisters in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of Tim Hudak and the PC caucus in recognition of International Women's Day.

The concept of a women's day goes back to the early part of the last century. Those early demonstrations and days of protests were rooted in the suffragette movement and the drive for equal rights. A wide variety of events with varying goals were observed all over the world, often with political overtones which were considered radical in their day.

It's hard to believe that in the long span of human history, women being granted such basic rights as the right to vote, hold property, sign a contract or even be legally considered a person under the law was only a heartbeat ago.

International Women's Day, as we now know it, was first observed as a popular event after 1977, when the United Nations General Assembly invited member states to proclaim March 8 as the United Nations Day for Women's Rights and International Peace. The official UN theme for this year's day is, "Empower ... Women—End Hunger and Poverty." This is a poignant reminder that although tremendous strides have been made over the last century, the challenge to meet some of the basic needs of life is still not within the grasp of hundreds of millions of women and their families around the world.

We can become complacent that the remaining inequities in our society are quite benign compared to those fought for by our ancestors 100 years ago. However, in much of the world, little or no progress has been made in 100 years, and that is a tragedy in itself.

This year's theme in Canada, as stated by the Status of Women, is, "Strong women, Strong Canada—Women in Rural, Remote and Northern Communities: Key to Canada's Economic Prosperity."

Being from rural Ontario myself, I have seen and experienced first-hand the integral role which women have played and continue to play in the economic and social fabric of Ontario. Women have made great progress on all fronts, even in politics. However, if you look around this chamber and count up the number of women who actually represent rural ridings from all parties, it's not a large number. In fact, I'm the first woman ever elected to the Ontario Legislature from my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

1330

In this Legislature as a whole, only 28% of us are women, indicating that there is still work to be done. However, I am quite optimistic that the next generation of young women entering political life will grace this Legislature in even greater numbers.

Despite the hard-earned progress that has been made by and for women in our province and country, employment and economic challenges still exist, particularly in rural Ontario. In November, I rose in the House to support the minister's statement on Woman Abuse Prevention Month and the commemoration of the Montreal massacre. On that occasion, speakers from all parties rightfully talked about the tragedy of spousal abuse and violence against women.

I wish I could claim that this horrific legacy is confined to less-developed countries, but I can't. It is a serious problem in our own backyard and needs to be given our highest priority.

However, as November was a time to highlight the worst remnants of women's drive for equality, today is the time to celebrate our successes while never forgetting the significant work and inequality that still exist.

Today, the government of Canada has the highest percentage of women in cabinet in Canadian history. The majority of full-time students in post-secondary institutions in Ontario and Canada are women. More women hold senior managerial positions in Canadian companies than ever before. Entrepreneurial women are starting their own businesses in ever greater numbers. In recent years, Canadian female athletes have shone on the world stage in unprecedented numbers, often surpassing the successes of their male colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, when the first women's day events were held in the early days of the 20th century in North America and across Europe, the protests and demands were targeting basic rights and discrimination based on gender. Today, in Ontario and Canada, most of the injustices that our great-grandmothers fought against have, for the most part, been addressed. However, as I indicated earlier, full equality has still not been achieved for all women, especially in Third World countries.

International Women's Day is a day to reflect on the struggles of our ancestors, to celebrate their victories and to consider what still needs to be done here and abroad.

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to speak on behalf of my leader and the PC caucus on such an important occasion as International Women's Day.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Mr. Speaker, International Women's Day offers us an annual opportunity to celebrate the pioneering individuals who have led the struggles to create a society that promotes diversity, tolerance, safety, social justice and equality between women and men.

Even in a country as young as Canada, there is no shortage of courageous women who led the struggle for voting rights, reproductive rights, child care, employment equity, peace and disarmament, and many other important causes whose impacts resonate to this very day.

It is only fitting, Speaker, that we honour the accomplishments of these women—these women of vision and courage—who provide inspiration for today's generation of women and men. Their inspiration is doubly important, because International Women's Day is also an opportunity to take stock of how far we've come and how far we, as a society, have yet to go.

The NDP has a proud history and a great track record when it comes to women's rights and women in politics. I'm very proud to be the leader of our party and to have the opportunity to work alongside the six other great women in our NDP caucus, actually making up 41% of our caucus.

While we have accomplished so much, we're also reminded daily that there is more work that needs to be done. The recession has left more women carrying the burden of family finances, and women still earn less than men earn in Ontario. In the 500 largest and most influential companies in Canada, men hold 93.8% of the top earning positions, making up 99% of the top 100 chief executive officers in terms of pay at publicly traded companies. Even among average wage earners, Speaker, women continue to fare poorly. Among those with full-time employment, women continue to take home only 70 cents on the dollar earned by men. Women are more likely to live in poverty in our province, even when they are working. A new Liberal crisis in child care in Ontario once again leaves parents, usually mothers, wondering whether they can afford to go to work or whether they'll be able to go to back to school to get a better job.

Women's issues today remain at the bottom of the priority list, as adequate funding for preventing or ending violence against women remains scarce and other issues that impact women's equality, women's equity, remain off the table.

New Democrats have long called for the implementation of a province-wide plan for closing the pay gap in Ontario. New Democrats have a plan, actually, for economic security for women and, in fact, for all persons in Ontario. We know that investing in good jobs will help

women to be able to become economically secure and economically dependent. We know that most Ontarians who are looking for work now would actually do well by our job creation plan, particularly women.

As we look at recommendations from the Drummond commission and see a government that is looking at deep cuts to social services and programs, we must be aware also of the potential impact of these cuts, particularly on women, because it is women who end up picking up the pieces. Far too often, cuts to social services, cuts to health care and cuts to education are made invisible because it is the women who are left filling the gaps and picking up these pieces as these programs are cut. We need a strong province, a province where equality and opportunity are shared, where women's needs and contributions are equally valued. We don't have that society here in Ontario yet.

New Democrats are very, very proud to be a party working towards that change. As a woman leader, I'm very, very proud to be here to speak to International Women's Day, and I say to all women: Take up your space. Take up your space every day.

I'll end with a quote that I put on Twitter today: "Well-behaved women seldom make history."

PETITIONS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Toby Barrett: A petition that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas there have been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

Speaker, I support this petition, support the names on it, and affix my name.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^me^ France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to present this petition from the people of the northeast. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government" is making PET scanning "a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

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"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario," with Health Sciences North, "its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through" Health Sciences North, "thereby serving and providing equitable access to the" people of the northeast.

I fully support this petition, Mr. Speaker, will affix my name to it and ask my trusty little page Ryan to bring it to the Clerk.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition from my constituents in the riding of Durham. One of the leaders there is Heather Rutherford of Clarington Wind Concerns. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed;

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative" and adverse "health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of" industrial "wind turbines;

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas there have been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario, and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development" immediately "until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and pass it to Judy, one of the pages, on their last day.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Mantha: This is from residents in the region of Algoma–Manitoulin.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have been paying over millions in extra charges on their hydro bills to help retire the debt. The amount collected to date, as per the Auditor General's report, is $8.7 billion, but the amount owing was $7.8 billion;

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking: 'Where is the money being invested?';

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking why this was not addressed at the time the debt was paid;

"Whereas electrical rates have increased with the new creation of green energy coming online, to include solar and wind, refurbishment of the nuclear plants, and deregulation of Hydro One;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows to obtain answers to the following questions:

"How much of the debt remains?

"When will it be eliminated from Ontario taxpayers' hydro bills?"

I agree with this petition, I will affix my name, and I will present it to page Rachel to bring it to you.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas there have been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario, and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

Mr. Speaker, I completely support this petition and have affixed my signature to it.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Rob Leone: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization"—the OFA, and the CFFO "have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas there has been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support" our very popular "Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition. I will affix my name to it and hand it to page Grace.

TAXATION

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have this very short petition from the people of Nickel Belt, and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" to "immediately exempt electricity from the harmonized sales tax."

I fully agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Mackenzie to bring it to the Clerk.

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Kim Craitor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought, for a minute, you couldn't see me.

Interjection: General Brock.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I want to thank Alison Hegarty from Niagara-on-the-Lake for putting these petitions together for me. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario is the only province in Canada that does not allow the provincial Ombudsman, who is an officer of the Legislature, to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities; and

"Whereas the people wronged by these institutions are left feeling helpless and most have nowhere else to turn for help to address their issues;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To grant the Ombudsman of Ontario the power to investigate hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities."

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support of the petition.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have petitions from around the province in support of paved shoulders on provincial highways.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary provincial highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka's private member's bill provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That private member's Bill 9, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated provincially owned highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

Of course, Mr. Speaker, I support this petition.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: This afternoon I have a petition from Lindsay McFarlane, who lives at 902 Philip Street in Peterborough, Ontario.

"A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada;

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bioartificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bioartificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States" of America.

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page William, on his last day here.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by a great many residents of the great riding of Oxford and the ridings surrounding it. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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"Whereas Tavistock's Bonnie Brae Health Care Centre is an 80-bed, D-class nursing home that must be either rebuilt or closed by July 2014; and

"Whereas there is currently an application by a private operator to move the 80 licensed beds outside of Oxford county to the city of London, despite the recent opening of two other long-term-care homes in Middlesex county in 2010; and

"Whereas long-term-care wait times in Oxford county can be as much as 134 days longer than in Middlesex county; and

"Whereas Tavistock receives referrals from the nearby Waterloo Wellington CCAC, which has among the highest waits for long-term care in the province;

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario retain these beds in Tavistock and seek partners to fast-track replacement of the Bonnie Brae as part of Ontario's 10-year plan to modernize 35,000 long-term-care beds."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to present the petition. I affix my signature, as I wholeheartedly agree with this petition.

WIND TURBINES

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical,

social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas there has been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature to this.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas there has been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

It's signed by many, many people from the riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I affix my signature, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The time for petitions has expired.

VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Durham on a point of order.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce quite a good friend of mine, Jeff Mole, who is from Trillium Energy Alliance. Welcome to Queen's Park, Jeff.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Welcome. I'll remind the member that that's not a point of order.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR ISAAC BROCK DAY ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE JOUR DU MAJOR-GÉNÉRAL SIR ISAAC BROCK

Mr. Clark moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to proclaim October 13 in each year as Major-General Sir Isaac Brock Day in Ontario / Projet de loi 35, Loi visant à proclamer le 13 octobre de chaque année Jour du major-général Sir Isaac Brock en Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Clark?

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to begin by thanking the co-sponsors of my bill, the members for Welland and Niagara Falls. I want to thank them for the enthusiasm that they showed right from the very start after I spoke to them about this bill. I also want to recognize—

Applause.

Mr. Steve Clark: That's great.

I also want to recognize the Minister of the Environment for his early endorsement of the bill. I appreciate his support and that of all three House leaders.

Really, the co-operation that we've had between the three parties makes this day possible. I know that sometimes Ontarians who watch our proceedings here must wonder, if our parties can't agree on the colour of the sky, how can we possibly agree on the importance—

Interjection: Blue.

Interjection: It's blue.

Mr. Steve Clark: I set you up on that one.

Certainly, but there are times when MPPs can come together and work co-operatively on issues like this. Unfortunately, sometimes that's done out of the sight of the cameras, but when we do have an opportunity to work together in a public way I think it's very, very important that we as MPPs acknowledge it.

Speaker, it's truly a privilege for me in this, the bicentennial of the War of 1812, to speak about Bill 35,

An Act to proclaim October 13 in each year as Major-General Sir Isaac Brock Day in Ontario. It will create an opportunity, every October 13, for communities across Ontario to celebrate the life of this patriot, to whom we all owe such a great debt. And the timing to recognize Brock in this special way could not be any better: Over the next two years, in ridings all across Ontario, communities will be holding special events to commemorate the many battles which were so fundamental in the birth of our great nation.

Of course we know there will be many historic figures whose sacrifices in those battles were integral to the ultimate victory and the signing of the Treaty of Ghent on Christmas Eve in 1814. Some of those heroes we continue to celebrate today because they're historical icons, like Laura Secord and Tecumseh. Many others, sadly, have long since been forgotten by the passage of time.

But there's one image our minds conjure when we think of the War of 1812: It's that proud pose of Major-General Sir Isaac Brock, the hero of Upper Canada. He was mortally wounded by a sniper's musket ball during the critical battle of Queenston Heights on October 13, 1812, two years before the official end of the war. But without his leadership in the years prior to the war and in its early days, Canada as we know it would not have come into being. His troops and the commanders who assumed his leadership took the last word Brock uttered before his death—"Surgite!"—to heart. They did indeed press on, all the way to victory.

As we speak about Brock's contribution to Canadian history and the legacy of his leadership this afternoon, I think it's important to set the scene of the immense challenges he faced. Quite frankly, the atmosphere on this side of the border was one of defeatism and hopelessness. We looked across that ribbon of water that divided us from the Americans, whether it was the St. Lawrence River or the Niagara River, and asked how could we possibly defend ourselves against such a powerful enemy. Indeed, here's what Brock wrote in a letter after meeting with the provincial Legislature on July 27, 1812, just over a month after the US had declared war and mere days after the invasion along the Detroit frontier by forces under Brigadier-General William Hull: "My situation is most critical, not from anything the enemy can do, but from the disposition of the people—the population, believe me is essentially bad—A full belief possesses them all that this province must inevitably succumb—This prepossession is fatal to every exertion—Legislators, magistrates, militia officers, all have imbibed the idea...."

It was, Mr. Speaker, a crisis of confidence that threatened to allow the American forces to sweep through Upper Canada and change the course of history. Against this backdrop of seemingly inevitable defeat at the hands of an enemy who outmanned us nearly five to one, stood Brock. As the writer Robert Collins noted, those badly outnumbered soldiers, whose own population had little faith in their chances of success, had four things going for them: discipline, training, purpose and a leader. In all of those things, they had Major General Sir Isaac Brock to thank.

1400

Collins noted that Brock possessed, in his physically striking, six-foot-two frame, all the qualities of greatness. I love how Collins described the way Brock carried himself, which brings the major general back to life. His quote: "He cut a fine swath in colonial society, but he was no ballroom general." He wasn't sipping tea. He rolled up his sleeves and got to work, even though we know that Brock, like many British officers of the day, found his posting to Canada in 1802 to be a little less than appealing. That disappointment was quickly erased by his sense of duty, and he worked hard to bolster the nation's defences and to address the problem of desertions that plagued the army at that time. Those early preparations, particularly his work to equip and train militia units in Upper Canada, would prove critical in those years to come.

I want to return for a moment to Collins writing about Brock in the book The Formative Years: Canada 1812-1871. "He had taken the Canadian posting reluctantly, yearning for the action and glory of European campaigns. But with characteristic thoroughness and fluent French learned in his native Guernsey, he studied the people and problems of the Canadas.

"He grew so committed to the colony that he later turned down a posting to Spain.

"Brock's troops, in turn, liked him, for he was fair—a rare trait in an age when a lost tunic button could earn a soldier 50 strokes from a lash pickled in brine. He was utterly fearless and made quick, accurate decisions. He knew the future battlegrounds as no other commander did. And in a war that flickered sporadically over three distinct fronts—the Niagara Peninsula and Upper Canada west, the Montreal and lower St. Lawrence region, and the Great Lakes—Brock was the standout, the first real Canadian war hero, the pacesetter for all who followed."

In other words, Speaker, this great leader, born in the Isle of Guernsey on October 6, 1769, became one of us. So it is with great reason that many roads, schools, institutions and municipalities honour Brock today by bearing his name. Who wouldn't want to be associated with him?

I'm proud as a former mayor of Brockville, which was renamed in his honour from Elizabethtown months before Brock's death in 1812. Today, a bronze bust of Major General Sir Isaac Brock proudly stands in the heart of the city on Court House Square, with the majestic Leeds and Grenville County Courthouse behind and a vista all the way down to the beautiful St. Lawrence River.

One of the great citizens of Brockville, historian Doug Grant, helped me tremendously in putting together this bill. Doug is a passionate, passionate lover of history, and his popular Brockville History Album series has encouraged generations of city residents to take an interest in our past.

He wrote about the ceremony held August 19 during the centennial year of the War of 1812 when the monument was unveiled to culminate a seven-year project launched by the General Brock chapter of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire. This bronze bust remains and rests atop a granite base that was done by renowned sculptor Hamilton MacCarthy, whose grandfather served under Brock and was wounded during the war. Guests of that August afternoon included Colonel Sir Sam Hughes, Minister of Militia and Defence. Photographs from the day show a huge crowd around the platform, and Hughes would pull back the flag-draped monument.

In 2008, a restored version of the monument and two informational plaques were unveiled in front of the new General Brock Gardens by Lieutenant Governor David Onley. This June, I'm looking forward to attending the rededication of the Brock monument, which I'm proud to say will be graced with the attendance of 13 descendants of the major general. This is such a special event, organized by Kim Barr of Brockville Tourism as part of a highlight of our local food and wine festival on June 22 and 23.

As I mentioned earlier, there are countless events going on across the province of Ontario. Our own War of 1812 bicentennial committee, which is called the St. Lawrence War of 1812 Bicentennial Alliance—I know that Jan Bonhomme, their executive director, and Alicia Wanless, their manager, are watching today. I was privileged last week to hear Alicia Wanless talk with such great enthusiasm of the events planned in our region and the economic impact that those tourists have. Up to 30% of the tourism market in Ontario is comprised of what is called the "history traveller," as they pump an estimated $1.76 billion into Ontario's economy every year. And that, I might add, is at the bottom end of the estimate.

So with events planned right across this province, from Cornwall to Windsor, I think it gives us a great opportunity to celebrate Brock's commitment.

Just some of the events in my riding: a garrison weekend at Fort Wellington, near Prescott, on May 19 and 21; the Spencerville Mill heritage fair on June 1 to 3, when we hope to capture a Guinness Book of World Records for most people in period costume; two events in Gananoque, the unveiling of Joel Stone Park and also the re-enactment weekend of the Raid on Gananoque. The annual summer St. Lawrence Shakespeare Festival has a performance of Othello, set in 1812. And of course, next year's highlight will be the Battle of Crysler's Farm bicentennial. It will mark 200 years since that decisive battle where a vastly outnumbered British unit, under Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Morrison, repelled an American attack and essentially ended the quest to capture Montreal.

Speaker, just in my closing few comments, I hope that members will support this bill. I can think of no more fitting way to honour this true hero of Ontario. Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Welland.

Speaker, I'm not going to read from notes because this is very close to my heart. I'm from Stoney Creek. In Stoney Creek, the battle of June 5 and June 6 of 1813 was the most critical battle of the War of 1812-14. It was the turning point of the war. A little over 700 British regulars, who had been put to the run by the Americans, were stationed at Queenston Heights, and they were joined by local militia from the Stoney Creek-Hamilton area, plus a few native Indians who joined in, which came to a total of just under 900. There were 2,600 Americans camped in Stoney Creek at Battlefield House, with two American generals. At the time, it was the first night battle of the War of 1812-14.

The British forces figured they might as well do a counterattack because, if they didn't, York would have fallen, Toronto would have fallen to the Americans, and the flag hanging outside this building would have been a little different. In that battle, they put the run to the Americans. They captured the generals and sent them packing back to Niagara. It is a battle that is overlooked by historians. It's overlooked by a lot of books. Yet, it was the most crucial, important battle of the entire war. So I just wanted to bring it to your attention.

Getting back to General Brock, General Brock was definitely a hero of his time, a great British leader, a great general and respected by his men. There were many other skirmishes that took place under General Brock's direction and a couple of larger battles that took place, but the biggest battle and the biggest result we ever had was in Stoney Creek.

For some reason—I don't know why—there's not a lot of history about it, but finally a local author came out with a book: Strange Fatality, The Battle of Stoney Creek. It was, without a doubt, the turning point of the entire war. We are looking forward to June 5 of next year, in 2013, to the 200th celebration.

I see my counterpart from Niagara Falls is dressed in period costume.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He looks good.

Mr. Paul Miller: He looks good. I too have dressed as a British artillery officer and lieutenant, and I have been in four re-enactments. I will be involved in the re-enactment on June 5, 2013, as a British officer. I'm looking forward to it and I'm thinking that right across this great province, it's going to be a wonderful, wonderful event.

1410

Many communities will be taking part in this. I certainly hope that the government spreads the money around equally to all areas. We certainly could put on a good show for all the visitors who will be here from Europe and from America. Many historians will be coming. Our group took part in Napoleon's wars—we sent people over from Stoney Creek to take part in the Battle of Waterloo. So there's a lot of history here in southern Ontario—in Upper Canada and Lower Canada—and I'm truly excited about what's going to

happen. I think it's going to bring a lot of focus onto Ontario. A lot of positive dollars will be coming into our province. We should take full advantage of it, Speaker. I'm truly, truly excited.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to get up today and co-sponsor this bill. The Legislative Assembly of Ontario, through its community exhibits program, has proudly displayed War of 1812 exhibits for the last few months, at least since I've been here. They're located in cases throughout the building, if people who are touring or in the gallery are interested in viewing them. The displays are evidence of the historical importance of the War of 1812 in shaping Canada as the nation we know today.

Ordered to Canada in 1802, and although his path never led him to a battle in the Welland riding, it was Brock's leadership and influence prior to the war that honed Canada's defences so they were able to successfully drive the southern invaders back over the border.

Alun Hughes, past president of the Thorold and Beaverdams Historical Society board of directors, authored a work for Niagara this Week in 2004 entitled Hidden History. It is about the area's rich but sometimes forgotten history. In one segment, he writes, "But the evidence for much of Niagara's history lies concealed from view, sometimes neglected and forgotten, sometimes changed out of all recognition, and too often lost" forever.

How many motorists passing through the Thorold tunnel under the Welland Canal in my riding know that the Battle of Beaver Dams, a pivotal encounter in the War of 1812, raged right above their heads, on June 24, 1813? Mr. Hughes correctly recognizes that, over time, we tend to forget about our history. It was kind of interesting to be able to go back and actually read a fair amount of history that I probably learned in high school but had forgotten most of.

So I stand here today on Bill 35, hopefully to recognize October 13 every year as Sir Isaac Brock Day. I also do so remembering the different perspectives that even people of that time had on the War of 1812. I'm honoured that these two striking exhibits here in the Legislature, displayed in the west wing just outside the NDP caucus area, are from community museums in the Welland riding. They're examples of different perspectives of the residents in the surrounding area during this time period.

Nora Reid, who is the curator of the Welland Historical Museum, whose ancestors actually fought in the War of 1812, remembers the sacrifices made by soldiers about 200 years ago during the war. The Welland exhibit proudly displays artifacts. It goes into great detail about the Battle of Cook's Mills, which is a small hamlet in my riding, where 700 or 800 people actually reside. That took place on October 19, 1814. British and Canadian troops forced the Americans to withdraw, following a heavy skirmish at Cook's Mills.

Stephanie Powell Baswick is the curator of the Port Colborne Historical and Marine Museum. She explained that their contribution to the program was worked on by Tami Daoust and Michelle Mason, both from the riding. The exhibit explains the War of 1812 from the perspectives of the settlers of the Port Colborne and Wainfleet areas in the riding.

The wives and mothers of the men who fought the battles worked the farms to supply the food. Also, many of these settlers were Quakers and Mennonites, whose beliefs were against war, but they were farmers and skilled workers such as blacksmiths, coopers, wheelwrights and millers. It was their work too that was relied upon to provide and transport the necessities such as food and equipment to the war effort. Though the work was of great benefit to the outcome of the war, these conscientious objectors had to pay heavy fines for their beliefs.

Award-winning and recognized Canadian writer Pierre Berton called Brock Canada's first war hero in his 1980 book The Invasion of Canada, 1812–1813. There are many reasons to pay tribute to Sir Isaac Brock for his contributions and his sacrifice in ultimately shaping Canada, but in doing so, we also need to remember, as Pierre Berton did, to be reflective on Sir Isaac Brock and the nature of war and the effects that war has on all members of society.

I'll use the rest of my time to actually highlight some little tidbits that came out of the research that we did: the fact that Alan Taylor, an American historian, wrote about the close connections between diverse populations which supported the two sides of the conflict.

"In this North American civil war, brother fought brother.... Like so many on both sides," some "thought of the war as continuing the revolutionary struggle between Loyalists and rebels.... At war's end in Upper Canada, the retreating invaders left behind a wasteland of plundered farms and burned mills...." During the summer of 1815, an American woman visiting the Niagara area could find "not a house or a barn but what was burnt or the inside destroyed.... It presented such a sight" that she felt ashamed of her own countrymen.

Numerous First Nations made great contributions to this war. In 1812, Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe's act to limit slavery had made Upper Canada a safe haven for freedom-seekers and escaped slaves from the United States. So when the United States actually declared war against Britain in 1812, the blacks living in Canada rallied to the flag to defend their new homeland and liberty.

The last piece that I found very interesting was actually a discussion. This was out of "A Day with a Veteran of 1813–15," and the author was the veteran's grandson. He's talking about being in a carriage with his grandfather and his uncle, and they're talking about Laura Secord. The uncle says, "'Father, did not Mrs. Secord, the heroine of the Beaver Dams, live near here?'

"'Yes,' was the reply, 'but she gets all the praise for that Beaver Dams exploit, when the larger share is due to a young girl, a cousin of Mrs. Secord's. This cousin was

the first to propose to go and warn the British and accompanied Mrs. Secord on that famous 20-mile trip through the forest....'

"'How is it, Father, that no one has corrected the story?'"

The father states: "'I suppose someone wrote it who didn't know all the particulars and no one has been willing to incur the risk of being considered so unpatriotic as to spoil so good a story by telling the whole truth,' suggested Grandpa in reply."

There are a lot of interesting facts when you go through the research about the War of 1812.

There are many bicentennial events going on across Niagara, in Niagara-on-the-Lake and in the various ridings across the Niagara Peninsula, so I encourage all Ontarians to take part in these events and go out and support them.

Once again, I will thank the member from Niagara Falls and the member from Leeds–Grenville for asking me to participate in this historic event.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Kim Craitor: It is certainly an honour for me to stand here in this place that we call Parliament and have the opportunity to speak in support of this bill. I want to thank Steve. You're not supposed to say members' names, but, Steve, I want to thank you for asking me. Little did I dream I would ever have this opportunity to support such a significant bill. And Cindy as well: Thank you.

I'm honoured to stand here, wearing an official, authentic uniform worn by an officer who fought in 1812. I want to thank the Niagara Parks Commission for providing me with this uniform. I've had the pleasure of wearing it on a number of occasions.

I should tell you that in my riding of Niagara Falls and in Niagara-on-the-Lake, this is normal attire. We see the history of this country as so engrossed in our community. We have re-enactments where 2,000 or 3,000 people show up, and we have a chance to see what it was like, what took place, the wars that took place and the conditions under which these wars were fought. It's just so exciting to see.

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In my riding, we always talk about, "The future is because of what we know from the past." Sir Isaac Brock—what he accomplished is why we're here today. So I want to talk a bit about Sir Isaac Brock.

There are really few individuals, Mr. Speaker, who in our past have shaped the course of our province so definitively as Major-General Sir Isaac Brock. His story is forever linked with a defining moment in our province.

He was born on the island of Guernsey and he trained in the British military tradition. He was not extremely well experienced in battle before he was assigned to North America. When he was sent to Canada, what he said was he felt that he was "buried in this inactive, remote corner." That's how he felt when he came here. Little did he realize that this corner would not be inactive, for by 1815, he would be considered forever the saviour of Canada. During the war of 1812, Brock would provide the leadership required during one of Canada's most defining moments.

Historians have used many adjectives to describe him. He was bold, he was honourable, he was audacious, he was brave, he was impulsive, he was aggressive—he was just like me.

Laughter.

Mr. Kim Craitor: There is no denying that his leadership, his personality and his charisma were essential in the defence and early development of our nation.

Leading up to the War of 1812, Brock was both a civilian and also the military leader of the province of Upper Canada. The British government was occupied with its battle for survival over in Europe and had stationed fewer than 2,000 soldiers in our province.

Upper Canada was surrounded by a nation that had defeated the British generations ago, so what they saw was the potential to expel them from the continent forever. They thought simply, "You just cross the river, you boot them out and you take over Canada." That's how simple they thought it was going to be.

In the years preceding the declaration of war, Brock identified many of the challenges in the defence of this province and, long before 1812, did all he could to correct as many of the issues as possible. It was the measures he took before the declaration of war that created an everlasting legacy.

Brock's foresight identified the need to better train the militia as more forces from Britain could not be relied upon to defend the long border. He started the Provincial Marine to defend the Great Lakes. He established new militia acts to engage the population and he sought the co-operation of the native allies.

For all his efforts to prepare the province for invasion, it was truly his boldness on the field of battle that has given him a place in history forever. Brock consistently wished to go on the offensive at the start of the war; that's what he believed. He was repeatedly told by his superiors, "Hold back. Hold back." However, at Detroit in July 1812, he saw the situation called for desperate remedies. He quickly moved his outnumbered forces across the Detroit River and forced the ill-prepared General Hull to surrender and won a bloodless victory.

His actions didn't go unnoticed. He was knighted for his decisive action but, more importantly, he set the tone for the rest of the war. He inspired the inhabitants of the province and he allowed them to believe an American invasion could be repelled.

Later that year in October, as American forces were threatening the province, Brock led the troops into battle. This time, Niagara was the target. The invading army had landed at several points and had taken a stronghold on the redan overlooking the village of Queenston. Something had to be done before more troops were allowed to cross the Niagara River and provide a foothold in the province.

October 13 is the day that his boldness and his courage pushed him to stare down the enemy and to lead the forces of Canada against the invading enemy. He died leading the charge up the hill. He died because of his determination to protect this province, to protect this country. He was a leader among leaders in the early days of our province.

Some of the province's most important individuals served under him. They believed that his role in our history should not be forgotten. They started to erect monuments. They named towns, they named streets, eventually schools and a university in St. Catharines—and I myself, Mr. Speaker, was quite honoured to introduce a bill a number of years ago to change the name of the 405, which goes right by the Sir Isaac Brock monument, to the Sir Isaac Brock parkway, and we were able to make that change. That was a historic day and a special day for me, and so to my friend that's introduced the bill: I know how he feels as well; why this is so special.

Sir Isaac Brock, because as they said when they were erecting these different monuments, he's a person—his leadership, his qualities were that required of a young nation: his perseverance, determination and boldness.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to mention a couple of the—you know, I believe that all the battles, no matter where they took place across this province, are significant. We had a number in our riding. I just wanted to touch on some of those battles. I wanted to share them with the House. Of course the battle of Queenston—and that's why we're specifically talking about Sir Isaac Brock.

You know, it's not that easy moving these papers with these gloves on, Mr. Speaker. With your indulgence, I'm talking them off. I was thinking on the way up here, Mr. Speaker—I had the opportunity to bring a musket with me, but I wasn't sure what the reaction of the House would have been. Somebody would have thought it might have been loaded and been a little worried I might have fired it inadvertently.

We also had the Frenchman's Creek battle that took place in Fort Erie, another significant battle. We also had Fort George. If you ever have an opportunity to come down to my riding, you're going to see the historic fort in Fort Erie. It's absolutely gorgeous. You're going to see the fort at Fort George. You're going to see major re-enactments. I hope you have some time. One of my colleagues mentioned that there is going to be, throughout this province, a real party: a party of celebrations, all the different events that are taking place.

We had the Battle of Chippawa in my riding. We also had a significant battle that took place up on Lundy's Lane, and every year it's recognized. So we have had, in my riding alone—and I know throughout the province—so many historic events, so many battles that helped define this province.

I want to close with a couple—what I believe is fitting to end with, and that would be the words of William Hamilton Merritt—

Interruption.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I think a musket just went off, Mr. Speaker. Has anybody fallen yet? No. Okay.

It's fitting to end with the words of William Hamilton Merritt, and here's what Merritt said. First, Merritt was a veteran of the War of 1812. He was chairman of Brock's monument committee, and he went on to become the developer of the Welland Canal and one of the province's most influential individuals. Upon the opening of the second Brock monument at Queenston, he provided a sense that it wasn't just a monument for Sir Isaac Brock or for those who fought alongside of him. He stated, "If Canada is worth preserving, we owe it to them."

The declaration of October 13 as Sir Isaac Brock Day isn't just a recognition of one individual, as important as it is to all of us in the House; it is to recognize all of those who survived the War of 1812, because we owe it to them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Today, it's my pleasure to speak to Bill 35 and add a few comments about Major-General Sir Isaac Brock and the great contributions that he made to our province and our country.

Before I begin, I would also like to thank my colleague the member for Leeds–Grenville in bringing forward today this bill, because I think that we don't often enough spend time recognizing the pillars and the foundations of the society that we have here in Ontario and in Canada.

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Brock believed it was his duty to protect Canada in the war against the United States. Before the war of 1812, he advocated enhanced training of military recruits and the arming of volunteer corps. There were a number of times, actually, when he spoke to the then provincial Legislature and brought them up to date, reminded them of the cost of being able to conduct a war, and generally, in a way that today we would feel certainly unencumbered by rules and regulations, he was able to come forward and speak.

He also secured Fort Michilimackinac on the west to make sure that his flank was protected, even though, at the time, most Canadians did not expect an attack.

As we have heard described, he was imaginative and bold in action, with an ability to calculate the enemy's plans and counteract them, and that certainly was true in the case of the American General William Hull, who was planning and preparing an attack on Niagara from Detroit. Brock precipitated Hull's action and in fact took Detroit from the Americans.

We've heard earlier speakers refer to how there was generally an air of pessimism and maybe depression amongst Canadians who didn't see that they had a hope against the numbers of Americans. But obviously the success of Brock in taking Detroit was a huge boost to the morale of the Canadians, as he had been successful with a much smaller force, reckoned to be 300 regular soldiers, 400 militia and 600 First Nations. Brock's partnership with the First Nations proved to be crucial to

the military success of Upper Canada. Tecumseh led his First Nations militia to circle around Detroit, which resulted in the surrender of General Hull.

Despite the victory for Brock at Detroit, American forces were together again for an assault on Niagara. It was on October 13, 1812, that Brock died at the Battle of Queenston, a battle that was started when the Americans crossed the Niagara River. Brock ordered an attack against the Americans and personally led the charge on foot. A true leader, Brock felt it was important to lead the troops himself. During this battle, he was killed by an American sharpshooter. He was buried shortly after, near Fort George, with nearly 5,000 people attending his funeral. The war dragged on for two more years. The failure of the Americans to take Niagara in the first year clearly demonstrated that taking Canada was not, as Jefferson had remarked, "a mere matter of marching."

Brock's legacy is that of a Canadian war hero. He had the foresight to plan and defend Upper Canada and partner with the First Nations and Chief Tecumseh. He led the troops himself, putting himself in danger. He sacrificed his life for this province and this country, and for that we should all be thankful.

It is also with thanks to Canadian publishers, such as Dundurn Press, who continue to explore our history and print books about the War of 1812. Because of these books, Ontarians and Canadians can continue to relive our past and learn about the great challenges that we have overcome together as a province.

I'm happy to support my colleague's bill, which I believe complements a 2007 resolution that I introduced, that passed in the Legislature, commemorating the War of 1812. What I said then is relevant today: that the War of 1812 is one of the defining moments in Ontario's history. The conclusion of the War of 1812 has meant that the development of both countries has continued for 200 years along the world's longest undefended border. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to participate in the debate today. I want to thank my colleague the member from Leeds–Grenville for introducing his bill, An Act to proclaim October 13 in each year as Major-General Sir Isaac Brock Day in Ontario.

I grew up in Essex county, near a little town called Cottam. I can remember my grandmother telling me stories about the War of 1812, as she had a real interest in history. She would tell me about the strategic placement of Amherstburg along the Detroit River and about the defeat of the Americans at Detroit. She also told me a story about Tecumseh, as she knew it, and his relationship with General Brock. Some of you may know that the town of Tecumseh near Windsor is named in his honour.

In my travels throughout the United States, I have noticed how the Americans recognize and admire their heroes. Canadians, on the other hand, have often struggled to do this throughout our history. We should not glorify war; however, we must recognize our historic figures. We must remember and record how people such as General Brock and others have helped to mould our history. Indeed, they shaped the outcome of what we now call Ontario.

General Brock fought with distinction, as did his troops. When he died, he was leading. He didn't follow in the background, as some of the leaders on both sides did.

I read with great interest a book about the War of 1812 by Pierre Berton. He goes into great detail about how General Brock was a visionary in his relationship with aboriginal people and how he was able to form relationships with them. For too long, native people had been persecuted, and they saw the opportunity to ally themselves with the British and help them bring peace for their people in the midwestern United States.

To be fair to the Americans, they were tired of blockades of American ports and the practice of impressment the British carried out if they captured American ships.

When the war started, it took place in the United States, and our forces were successful. However, this changed midway through the war, and the Americans were determined to invade.

General Brock's stance and his death at the Battle of Queenston Heights is well-recorded in our history books. A sniper's bullet took his life. This battle showed the Americans that Canada would not be a pushover, as many of them had thought.

I am pleased to support my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, and I want to commend him for introducing Bill 35 and for highlighting an important part of our province's history.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It gives me great pleasure to stand in the chamber today on the recognition of Major General Sir Isaac Brock.

I'm an alumni member of Brock University in the fine city of St. Catharines, class of 1997, Mr. Speaker. I often, as a historian myself—I teach history—and the member from Perth–Wellington put it quite well that we here in Canada sometimes forget the noble duty and the noble work that our predecessors have put in place for us.

So as an alumni of Brock University, I just want to touch on Brock University a little bit, because I think it's significant that the great institution of Brock was named accordingly. It was established in 1964. I wasn't around when it was established; I was just a young pup—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: You were, or you still are?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I still am, thank you very much.

It's considered a smaller university. When you walk through those hallways, the relationships that you build and the camaraderie with your fellow students—it's a great opportunity to show the leadership. We plant the seeds at Brock University of leadership.

One of the mottos of the university is "Surgite," the last words of Sir Isaac Brock as he was lying there on the

field, as his life was being taken from him. Surgite; push on. I think that's important. General Brock had the vision of what Canada could be, what Ontario could be, and Brock University stands for that today.

Great, great professors—the fine member here from Cambridge, Mr. Leone, taught at Brock briefly. Professor Salisbury, Professor McLeod, Professor Matheson, Professor Brian Crick: These are individuals whom I admired, I look up to. These are individuals who inspire the young great minds of the province to look for something better, look for something that Major-General Sir Isaac Brock had and the vision of what we have here potentially. This is what he fought for, what he believed in.

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I'm very happy to stand here and talk about Brock University and my experiences there. Just before I attended Brock, there was a student lounge called Alfie's Trough. Alfie, of course, was Sir Isaac Brock's horse, so this is a fond recognition of Alfie, whom Sir Isaac Brock adored. Of course, the faculty decided that it was a great little location to have their staff gatherings and it soon turned into a staff facility overlooking the Niagara Escarpment, and it's quite fitting. So Isaac Brock had a profound impact on my life.

I'm happy to say that with the leadership here of the member my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, I wholeheartedly support this endeavour. I'm glad to see that all parties can actually collaborate to work together on something so important not only for ourselves but for the future generations of this great province and the vision that Sir Isaac Brock had and what we could be, what we can be and what we are.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to address that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Leeds–Grenville, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Steve Clark: I just want to take the opportunity to thank the members who presented today: the members for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, York–Simcoe, Perth–Wellington, Northumberland–Quinte West and, last but certainly not least, the two co-sponsors of my bill, the member from Welland and the very flamboyant red-coated member for Niagara Falls. I just want to take the opportunity to thank all the members for their speeches, for their comments, and for all their co-operation today.

As I mentioned earlier, over the next couple of years there will be countless special events taking place across Ontario to commemorate the battles that saw the War of 1812 go in our favour. While we do this, it's an opportunity to celebrate the 200 years of peace, prosperity and partnership that we have with Canada and the United States. Two greater allies the world has never known, and it's fitting that the 1812 bicentennial committees across the province are working very closely with our friends on the other side of the border to plan these activities. I think it's very important to mention that.

The member for York–Simcoe talked about the War of 1812 being a defining moment in this province, and I have to agree wholeheartedly with her. I encourage all members to promote 1812 activities in their area, to grasp that history traveller. I know that my own St. Lawrence Bicentennial Alliance will be promoting events. We want the history traveller to come. We want them to know—in the words of the member for Niagara Falls—about the saviour of Canada, Major-General Sir Isaac Brock. I hope that if everything goes as favourably as I hope in my heart, on October 13, communities around the province will help us celebrate this saviour of Upper Canada, Major-General Sir Isaac Brock.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal with the vote at the end of private members' business.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I move that, in the opinion of this House, a moratorium should be placed on further industrial wind energy development until third party health and environmental studies have been completed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Thompson has moved private member's notice of motion number 8. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased today to stand and debate my motion for the first time as MPP for Huron–Bruce.

Before I get started debating my motion, I first want to say some thank you's to people for their guidance and support in the development of my first motion. Thank you to Patrick Jilesen and John Gillespie of the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture; and Bill Palmer, Bethanee Jensen and Jennifer Small from the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario. Your support today means a lot to me. I'm proud that both Pat and Bethanee stood up on behalf of their respective memberships and shared their position, joining me in calling for a moratorium on further industrial wind turbine development, in an earlier news conference today.

To my team, Ashley Hammill, and Lauren Hanna in Toronto, and locally, Janet Haines, Lynne DiCocco and Sarah Ross: You know first-hand how hard the rising costs of energy have impacted our folks at the local level. I appreciate your dedication, and I thank you for your commitment in dealing with this issue.

To the thousands of people who have sent emails, signed petitions and travelled from home from as far as Amherst Island today to join us at Queen's Park: I appreciate your support so much. I sincerely thank you.

To my PC caucus: Your support has been a tremendous confidence booster, and I look forward to reciprocating in days to come.

Interjection: Good team.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It is a good team.

I also would like to specifically address the good folks who were demonstrating outside Queen's Park today in support of my moratorium. I tried to get outside to greet you, but I got tied up. We have many issues in Huron–

Bruce, such as the closure of the Bluewater Youth Centre.

Two hundred people who work for Bluewater went to work on Monday to find out that their jobs were done. It's just disgusting how such a hasty, immediate move has caused such a negative economic impact on Goderich yet again. So we've had to deal with this difficult issue again today.

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member is quite aware that we're not allowed to use phones.

The member from Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much.

It's just shameful, as I said, the negative economic blow that the Goderich community will face yet again with the closure of the youth centre.

But I need to get back to the matter at hand. We know that in Ontario we need renewable energy as part of our energy mix going forward, but we need to do it in a way that's respectful to communities and it has to make economic sense.

There are many reasons why the time is now for a moratorium on further wind development. Ontario has a surplus of energy. When I take a look at some of the records, suggestions and credible people who have spoken on this issue, I want to share a couple of exact comments with you today. As I said, Ontario has a surplus of power.

According to the Auditor General, Ontario hasn't hit its energy peak since 2006, six years ago. The fact of the matter is, we have been a net exporter since then. We've lost $1.8 billion on those exports, and we'll pay FIT developers $225 million a year not to produce energy. In 2010, 86% of wind power was produced on days when Ontario was already in a position of net export.

The OPP, or the OPA—

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yeah. The OPP say it's criminal, but the OPA noted that demand is expected to remain flat or decline due to continued conservation efforts and uncertain or slow economic recovery, while supply is expected to increase as a result of significantly more renewable energy coming online.

Don Drummond advised, "There are a number of potentially large opportunities to source efficiencies in the sector and slow down electricity rate increases."

Honest to Pete, hydro bills are expected to rise another 46% by 2015, and people can no longer afford this.

To move on to some physical health implications, the Ontario Environmental Review Tribunal decision in Chatham-Kent is an interesting one. I'd like to review Blakes Bulletin. It's a newsletter that is distributed by the law firm of Blake, Cassels and Graydon. They say in their July newsletter:

"On July 18, 2011, the Ontario Environmental Review Tribunal ... released its first decision regarding an appeal of a renewable energy approval ... which is issued by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment ... under the Environmental Protection Act.... Appeals of REAs are significant to those opposing renewable energy projects, such as wind farms, because they constitute the last opportunity under the EPA to block a project."

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In this particular newsletter, in the Blakes Bulletin, it goes on to say, in their legal opinion, "This appeal is unlikely to be the last legal challenge to wind farm projects. Indeed, the ERT left the door open to further appeals, citing the need for additional research into the effects of turbine noise on human health."

Interjection: Looks like they get it.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: They get it, absolutely.

Further to that, in Ontario, citizens living in Huron, Chatham–Kent–Essex, Dufferin, Bruce, Prince Edward, Grey, Haldimand and Norfolk counties, as well as Nepean–Carleton, to name just a few, have filed hundreds of complaints with the Ministry of the Environment regarding adverse health effects since wind turbines started operating.

On the social health side, many rural communities are being torn apart, as most wind turbine projects are being developed in a top-down approach as opposed to bottom-up, which would facilitate community buy-in. Particularly in my home riding of Huron–Bruce, five families in the Ripley area—I know some of you are familiar with that area—have had their homes purchased and they have relocated under a corporate gag order used by wind companies to prevent fair and open discussion of these projects.

Interjection: Shameful.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It is shameful. The gag orders were implemented to stop impacted people from speaking about negative experiences. While the McGuinty government fiddles, the tension in our communities is reaching crisis proportions.

Another example of the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask the member to refrain from calling members' names and to stick to riding names or titles.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Duly noted. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier this year, I want to note that a church in my area called our constituency office expressing concern that they would not be able to meet their energy cost bills. I'm telling you, every fabric of our community is being impacted by these terribly expensive projects and ideals, if you will.

We have to look at wind energy as it relates to the economic health of our communities as well. In the UK, the Civitas Institute has concluded, in a 2012 report, that there is no economic case for wind power. In Germany, wind power has been noted as a threat to the economy. In Spain, the government is ending green energy subsidies. Two weeks ago in Britain, more than 106 government MPs publicly demanded that the Prime Minister, David Cameron, end or at least dramatically cut the $700-million payout in annual subsidies for wind farms that produce less than 0.5% of Britain's total consumption.

Wind power is more expensive to produce than any other form of power. Based on the present 10- to 20-year contracts, wind power producers are guaranteed fixed rates of payments between 13 and 19 cents per kilowatt hour, whether the power is needed or not. Alternatively, nuclear energy costs the consumer five to six cents per kilowatt hour, and hydro-generated power—

Interjection: Water power.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: That's right—costs 4.5 cents per kilowatt hour.

The Auditor General's report points out that billions of dollars of new wind and solar power projects were approved in Ontario without many of the usual planning, regulatory and oversight processes. The Auditor General states that the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority must conduct an objective cost-benefit assessment of the situation so that a balance can be achieved between the pursuit of renewable energy and a reasonable price for electricity.

By 2015, the power grid is going to have around 8,000 megawatts of renewable energy, mostly wind, and 10,700 megawatts by 2018. With just over 1,700 megawatts of wind today, the grid is unmanageable during peaks of surplus baseload generation. Whether we have to export this power at a loss or power down nuclear plants, the question needs to be begged of the government of the day: What kind of business plan is that, when we're powering down baseload generation at a reasonable cost?

According to Tom Adams in the National Post just last week, "Ontario is in the midst of a policy-created power crisis of profound significance to the future of the provincial economy."

You know, it's sad; when I look out throughout the chamber today, it's really, really disturbing that so few members of the party opposite and of the third party are actually in their seats when literally thousands of people are asking for relief from energy—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Again, I bring it to the attention of the member: It is not parliamentary to indicate that members are not in the House. It is quite okay to say who is here.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My riding of Huron–Bruce is called Ontario's west coast because of its picturesque coastlines and thriving tourism sector. I would hate to see tourists no longer want to vacation to what I consider one of the most beautiful parts of Ontario because of an excessive number of wind turbines dotting the shoreline that, frankly, we don't need.

The sad reality is that municipal governments and farm organizations are now calling for the Liberal government to act in the best interests of its citizens and to put a moratorium on wind and solar projects until proper health and economic studies are done to determine long-term ramifications on individuals, environment, communities and our economy.

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, the National Farmers Union, the Perth dairy producer committee, the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture and 80 municipalities have all taken a stand and asked the government to do the honourable thing: to take a sober second look at what the Green Energy Act is doing to rural Ontario.

Ladies and gentlemen, you have an opportunity today to do the right thing. I challenge you all—

Interjection: Do the honourable thing.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Do the honourable thing: Listen to the thousands of people who have asked for relief. Do the right thing, ladies and gentlemen: Support my moratorium.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Just as a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order: the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It was indicated that we're not allowed to mention who's not here; we can say, however, there are only 12 Liberals sitting in their seats.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to contribute to this debate on the motion of the member from Huron–Bruce.

At the outset, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate all my lady colleagues in this House and also all the women in my riding of Richmond Hill and in our beautiful province of Ontario on this very day, International Women's Day.

I also want to acknowledge four people from Zero Carbon Ontario who are sitting in the members' gallery: Patricia Warwick, Shawn Khan, Rita Bijons and Angie Orellana-Schwalm. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, in 2009, our government made a policy decision: We decided to introduce green energy, renewable energy, into the energy mix of Ontario. We did this because we wanted to get rid of dirty coal. Why did we want to get rid of dirty coal? Because burning coal in our power plants, Mr. Speaker, was actually costing Ontarians $4.4 billion a year in human and environmental costs.

We decided to shut down our coal-fired power plants by the year 2014. Up to this point, Mr. Speaker, we have shut down 10 coal-fired power plants, and we are going to shut down the rest within about two years.

Burning coal to produce electricity is the worst way of producing electricity because of its human and environmental damage. I'll just give some examples from the medical association of Ontario: Every year, 700 Ontarians are dying prematurely because of burning coal in our power plants; every year, 900 people are admitted to hospitals because of burning coal in our power plants; every year, 1,000 people are visiting emergency rooms in hospitals because of burning coal to produce electricity. Every year, Mr. Speaker, over 330,000 Ontarians are developing minor diseases such as coughing and other respiratory diseases. That's why we wanted to shut down coal power plants. That's why we wanted to create a new

technology, a new mix of energy in this province, to go to renewable energy, to bring in solar energy, wind energy, biomass energy, biogas energy and geothermal energy. These are the renewable energies.

1500

Shutting down coal-fired plants, Mr. Speaker, in terms of its environmental impact, is equivalent to removing seven million cars off of the streets, roads and highways of this province. Just to put this in perspective, it is equivalent to more than half of the cars already on the streets and the roads of this province.

This is our approach. But let's look at the approach of the other side, the Conservative Party, on this energy issue. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party has no credibility—absolutely no credibility—when it comes to energy issues, when it comes to the energy file.

I'll just give you some examples. I'm not going to get into details, but go back to the days of Ontario Hydro. They broke Ontario Hydro into four companies. They wanted to privatize Ontario Hydro. They sold electricity to a price list and its cost value. They created a $20-billion debt for Ontarians, and still we are paying for that debt as a debt retirement charge on our electricity bills.

They mismanaged the nuclear power plants in this province. For the first time in the history of the province of Ontario, Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the federal agency, came and shut down our nuclear power plants solely because of the safety issues in the Pickering and Bruce power stations. That is their—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please.

I would remind everybody that, as this debate started, the House was very quiet.

The member from Richmond Hill.

Mr. Reza Moridi: That's what they did. As a result of that, Mr. Speaker, they created a vacuum in terms of our generating capacity of electricity in this province. As a result, they increased burning coal in our power plants by 127%. As a result, we had blackouts in this province for the first time in generations—for a long, long time. This is basically the work which they did when they were in office when it came to electricity. Now they talk about nuclear energy, but while they were in office, actually they couldn't manage our nuclear power plants, which used to be one of the best in the world in terms of safety and efficiency.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to give you a couple of quotes from our colleagues here from the other parties. For example, when the MPP for Essex was asked about putting a moratorium on wind energy, he said, "I think it sends the wrong sign to green energy producers and green energy manufacturers in the province."

I will give you another quote from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing, who actually supported, like many of the Conservative MPPs—they supported green energy, wind energy, and then they changed their minds. "We recognize the importance of wind. I want to make one thing abundantly clear: We should be making every investment we can in renewables in this province.... We support renewables: Any kind of energy that you can get without burning anything is good energy—damned good energy, in my mind. It's good for the province and it's great for the environment. We support that 100%." This is the MPP for Renfrew–Nipissing.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share my time with my colleague the MPP from Mississauga–Streetsville, but before doing that, I want to just tell concerned Ontarians that the minister is listening. We have set up the committee to review the Green Energy Act. The report will be coming. There will be some consultations with the people concerned on this very issue.

I will leave the rest for my colleague from Mississauga–Streetsville.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you to my colleague from Huron–Bruce for putting forward this very sensible private member's bill today. I think the evidence has been mounting for a long time now, and this is the perfect opportunity for the government to hit the pause button, put a moratorium in place and take a real close look at this, for a myriad of different reasons.

I just want to tell you a little bit about Ostrander Point, which is in my riding of Prince Edward–Hastings, down on the south shore of Prince Edward county. I think there are only two members of the House who have actually been to that spot: our energy critic, the MPP from Nipissing, and of course myself have been down there. It's a beautiful spot.

The member from Huron–Bruce outlined some of the beautiful landscapes in her riding. There are many on the south shore of Prince Edward county, particularly where this turbine proposal is being planned for. For those of you who don't know—and I've talked about Prince Edward county in the past—it is a beautiful place: wineries, beautiful shorelines. We have cottage country there and all kinds of farmland as well.

It's very insulting, I know, to the people of Prince Edward county when the government side always makes the claim that they don't care about renewable energy. They make the claim that it's renewable; it's wind versus coal. Well, that's not an argument that you should be making in this House because none of us over here want coal. As a matter of fact, as we pointed out here through a couple of heckles today, our member from Kitchener–Waterloo is the only person to have ever shut down a coal-fired generating plant in the province. This government has said that they're going to close down coal plants for years now and none have shut down under their watch.

As I move along very quickly, I have to make a point about the public consultation sham, that this government says they consult the public. This government does nothing to consult the public. As a matter of fact, just after Christmas, in my riding, I had a town hall meeting. We packed a church. There were hundreds of people in a

church—a church that's not closing because of rising energy prices. It was pretty hot in there that night, though, because people have a lot to say to the government. The unfortunate thing is this government isn't listening to them.

I just want to give you a few items that I have here on what the public consultation process looked like for the Minister of the Environment. They called it a public consultation process. There were no meetings in Prince Edward county hosted by the MOE. The ministry's own EBR posting for the project provided incorrect mailing addresses for people who were writing in to provide comment on the proposed project down there. The Internet website went down more than a dozen times during that process—who knows how many different pieces of correspondence didn't make it to the intended recipient? And perhaps that's the way the government wanted it; I'm not sure. But it was a sham. The public process was a sham.

This shouldn't be, as I said earlier, a debate about coal versus wind. I think the Minister of Energy makes a fool of himself when he stands up in the Legislature and makes such claims. There's reason for debate on this, and it's not about wind versus coal; it's about smart and reliable energy. I think the evidence is mounting every day and we should take a closer look at it. Now is the time to put a moratorium in place.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: The issue of industrial wind turbines and Dalton McGuinty's failed Green Energy Act is something that is of great concern to my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex and to the people all across this province.

To date, as we've heard, nearly 100 municipalities have passed resolutions calling for a moratorium on further turbine development. The most recent of these is, of course, in my riding: the municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Association have joined the call for a moratorium on further wind development.

Industrial wind turbines have raised serious concerns regarding health effects and property values, and the McGuinty government needs to answer these questions before—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Once again, I will remind this member, as I have to others, to stay away from names.

Interjection: You said "McGuinty."

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Oh, sorry. The current Liberal government needs to answer these questions before continuing to move forward. By ignoring these concerns, the current Liberal government has sent the message to the people of rural Ontario that they do not matter.

1510

Speaker, I oppose the heavy-handed approach that the Dalton McGuinty government is taking by forcing these wind turbines on rural Ontario. This approach is not democratic and it's not productive. I've said it before, but truly, the greatest injustice facing rural Ontario today is that Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government sit here, in Toronto, at Queen's Park, and dictate to rural communities where and when they must install industrial wind turbines.

Speaker, I believe in democracy. I believe in giving a voice to rural Ontario. That is why I will be holding a turbine and Green Energy Act public town hall meeting this Monday, on March 12, at Amy's Place Restaurant in Strathroy, in my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I extended, almost two weeks ago, an invitation to the Minister of Energy, the Honourable Chris Bentley, and the minister has not even bothered to respond. I think that this issue is important enough that the minister should attend—or at least should have the courtesy of a reply. Locally elected officials in my riding have committed to attending. I have many mayors, deputy mayors and councillors throughout the riding who are coming.

For the minister: This meeting in Strathroy is a 20-minute drive from his riding. To date, several MPPs from our side of the House, including PC energy critic Vic Fedeli and MPPs Bob Bailey, Lisa Thompson and Rick Nicholls, have confirmed their attendance.

Speaker, I stand here today in support of my colleague the member from Huron–Bruce, Lisa Thompson's motion calling for a moratorium on all wind turbines until a third party has conducted a comprehensive study on the side effects of wind turbines. This is an important motion. I ask all members of the House to please stand with the Ontario PC Party and stand up for rural Ontario. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Well, thank you very much, Speaker. I first of all want to commend my colleague from Richmond Hill. Mr. Moridi, of course, is an eminent scientist in his own right, with a Ph.D. in physics. I think that members would do very well to listen to some of his remarks and to pay attention to them.

Now, you know, in a nation that properly consults its citizens, where they've developed a consensus on renewable energy—and I'm speaking of the Netherlands—wind power has a long and successful history, from powering flour mills to generating electricity using the abundant North Sea wind. As of December 2009, 1,975 wind turbines were operational in the Netherlands. With an aggregate capacity—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Stop the clock.

The member from Nepean–Carleton, you know better, and I'll call you to order. The next time, I will have to take action.

I would advise the audience: You're welcome to be here with us today and you're welcome to observe, but I would discourage you from any applause or participating in the debate.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you again, Speaker. The Dutch are trying to meet the EU-set target of producing 9% of their total electricity from renewable sources.

When global installed wind capacity was only 6,000 megawatts in 1996, contrast that to today, when it's more than 200,000 megawatts worldwide, and it's growing quickly. Who is the world leader? China. It has more than 50,000 megawatts of wind-generated capacity in operation, more than anyone else in the world. And in second place? The United States of America. Canada is in the top 10 worldwide, but only just ahead of Denmark and only just behind the UK.

Now, Speaker, noise and vibration from wind farms are far less than the equivalent traffic and industrial uses to which residents of urban and metropolitan areas have been exposed, without measurable effect, for centuries. The premise of this resolution is without scientific merit or basis.

Wind energy is a benign technology with no associated emissions, no harmful pollutants and no waste products. In more than 25 years and with more than 68,000 wind generators installed around the world, no member of the public has ever been harmed by the normal operation of a wind turbine.

In response to recent unscientific allegations in the UK that wind turbines emit what is called infrasound and cause associated health problems, Dr. Geoff Leventhall, a consultant in noise vibration and acoustics and author of the Defra Report on Low Frequency Noise and Its Effects, says: "I can state quite categorically that there is no significant infrasound from current designs of wind turbines. To say that there is an infrasound problem is one of the hares which objectors to wind farms like to run. There will not be any effects from infrasound from the turbines."

In fact, the truth is that, at about 50 decibels, wind turbines are just slightly noisier than a quiet bedroom and less noisy than a room in an average house. Wind turbines are far less noisy than normal office interiors and far less noisy than the interior of our cars.

Speaker, I am advised that a company in Prince Edward–Hastings has received a $160,000 grant from the federal Conservative government to explore small-scale wind projects. That's bringing investment right into their own riding.

Let's talk about some of the things that others say about wind turbines. Says Bart Lavis, a project manager with Leader Resources Services Corp., "I wake up every morning proud to be part of a preventive mandate, a proactive, pioneering movement in clean energy."

Says Bonnie Van Tassel of the Ernestown Wind Park Inc., "I work for a small wind developer based in Toronto"—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Dufferin–Caledon, would you come to order, please.

Mr. Bob Delaney: —"and I cannot imagine a more inspiring and exciting career. I cannot imagine a future where my family would not be able to live a long and healthy life because of short-sighted political action interfering with the mandates of the Green Energy Act."

You know, Speaker, we've got quote after quote after quote. Basically, there is no scientific merit or basis to this resolution, and I urge that it be defeated. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to speak briefly in support of the resolution brought forward this afternoon by the member for Huron–Bruce. In the five months since she was elected to this Legislature, she has done an outstanding job on a number of issues representing her constituents, and it's in that spirit that she brings forward this resolution today.

Our caucus is on the record for at least two and a half—almost three—years, calling for an independent health study before the government goes whole hog into the wind energy business in Ontario. A number of resolutions have been brought forward in the past. Our former colleague the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Bill Murdoch, brought forward a resolution similar to this, not quite as brief and to the point but certainly in the same spirit. Our colleague the member for Kitchener–Waterloo has raised these issues in the Legislature. My colleague the member for Dufferin–Caledon and myself—I have brought forward a similar resolution. So I think we've demonstrated a great deal of consistency and credibility on this issue, and obviously we would hope that at some point the government will begin to listen.

The fact is, in the election on October 6, the government lost its majority, but it's also true and, I think, arguably true, that a significant number of the seats that the government lost were directly attributable to this issue and the mishandling by the Liberal government and their unwillingness to listen to communities.

There are a significant number of people who are with us in the visitors' gallery today. They are here because they're very, very concerned, obviously, about the health impacts, and it's very disappointing to see the government members unwilling to take this issue seriously. The fact is, we have an opportunity today as an Ontario Legislature to express support for a moratorium on further wind farm development until a fair and independent health study is done. I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker: That is in the public interest. The member for Huron–Bruce is right, and I would ask all members of this House to support her resolution when it comes to a vote this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I, too, am very pleased to rise in the House today in support of the member from Huron–Bruce, whose bill calls for a moratorium on further construction of industrial wind turbines until there are third party health and environmental studies done.

1520

Thank you to all the people in the gallery for coming today. Thank you to all the people in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock who keep up the fight against the industrial wind turbines for the right reasons.

The members have all spoken today—and we've heard time and time and time again that there needs to be a moratorium on industrial wind turbines.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville: I mean, what part of "whoop, whoop" don't you get? Come on. These people are here. There are 5% to 15% who have health effects from wind turbines. What, are we just going to ignore this situation? I can speak as a nurse to say that the people are real, the symptoms are real and the effects of the industrial wind turbines are real on them. And yes, we can have consultants on both sides. We're saying, "Put a moratorium on it." The member from Huron–Bruce is exactly right in what she says. We've said it again and again and again.

The Auditor General—you can go on to the business case of this, which we've discussed many, many times.

The other member who spoke about coal: We're all agreeing that coal plants should be shut down. Why do you keep bringing that up? That is of no relevance to this discussion at all. Don't listen to the Minister of Energy, who brings these things up in question period. It's absolutely ridiculous. I mean, stop that message track over there.

I have people who phone my constituency office every day because they can't afford to pay their hydro bills because of these expensive green energy experiments that are driving them out of their homes or making them choose between putting food on their table and paying their hydro bills. We're saying to you that you've messed it all up as an energy policy. There's no question about that. Real people are suffering financially. Real people are suffering the health effects. Dr. Petrie's coming in in a couple of weeks to speak to people about the effects on the environment, on the birds. What, do you just ignore all these things that are out there for the greater greener good, and you put this province in bankruptcy and people out of their homes? You should be ashamed of yourselves.

I'm pleased to support the member from Huron–Bruce today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to speak today to the motion from the member for Huron–Bruce, in which she calls for a moratorium on the development of wind energy in this province. I want to start off with some of my main points, and then I'm going to go back to those points and enlarge on them.

Now is not the time to slow down or stop wind development and development of green energy jobs in Ontario. Third party health and environmental studies have already been conducted. The jury is in.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I would remind you that when all your members spoke, the House was extremely quiet, and I would like to give the member from Toronto–Danforth the same privilege.

The member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Why, thank you, Speaker. It's, as I've said before, good to know that someone is listening.

The studies have already been conducted and the information is in. The government does need to change the way that renewable energy projects are being implemented; they need to adjust the tariffs to make green energy more affordable; they need to give priority to community-owned and public projects, and they need to substantially improve the consultation process with local communities.

The NDP has made concrete suggestions on how to maximize the economic benefits and minimize health and environmental impacts of energy projects. We proposed in our platform a full provincial environmental assessment of the province's energy plan to assess and minimize health and environmental impacts. We have recommended that, before all other things, we pursue all cost-effective conservation and energy efficiency options to minimize the need for new generation of any kind.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Water power.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Northumberland–Quinte West, this is the last warning.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: And we've recommended that the province maximize the potential for local economic development by giving priority to community-owned and public energy projects and putting in place strong domestic content requirements.

I made many of those points in the course of the debate over the Green Energy Act. It was unfortunate that the Liberal Party did not support those motions, those amendments, because that would have dealt with many of the concerns that we see exhibited in this province today.

I want to speak to the question of health and environmental assessments in a bit more detail. Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health has reviewed the studies that have been published in peer-reviewed journals. She concluded there is no direct link between wind turbine noise and adverse health effects, but recognized that sound could annoy some people.

Other independent third party studies have shown that when properly sited, wind turbines have minimal health and environmental impacts. Dr. Cornelia Baines, University of Toronto epidemiologist, states that "large and well-designed comparative studies have examined the health effects of wind turbines in Holland, England and the" United States. "There is no evidence of any significant negative impact on health."

A Stanford University study concluded that wind power has less impact on human health, on water supply, on land and wildlife than solar, geothermal, tidal, wave, hydroelectric, nuclear and coal. Wind is a better bet.

A September 2009 report by Dr. Ray Copes, director of environmental and occupational health at the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, concluded that "there is no scientific evidence to date to demonstrate a causal association between wind turbine noise and adverse health effects," although it "sometimes may be annoying to some people, which may result in stress and sleep disturbance."

The impact of wind turbines on the environment, including birds and bats, is much smaller than other sources of energy. Less than 0.01% of bird fatalities are caused by wind turbines. The National Audubon Society "strongly supports properly sited wind power as a clean alternative energy source that reduces the threat of global warming."

This motion has come forward, asking for a moratorium because we need health studies, and I say to you, Speaker, the health studies are done. The jury is in.

Other sources of power have greater health and environmental impacts. In contrast to wind, coal is a major contributor to air pollution, which has caused premature deaths of thousands of Ontarians, according to the Ontario Medical Association. The McGuinty government's decision to keep coal plants open until 2014, instead of shutting them down today—which it could do—will lead to the unnecessary death of 1,000 Ontarians, according to the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario.

Nuclear energy is also far more dangerous to health and the environment than wind power due to ongoing emission of low-level radiation, risk of accidents and the unsolved problem of trying to isolate radioactive waste for tens of thousands of years.

The member from Huron–Bruce is, I am sure, aware of the health studies showing the relationship between the siting of nuclear power plants and cancer. A variety of studies have shown elevated risk of cancer to those living close to nuclear power plants. In January, the International Journal of Cancer published a French study on nuclear power plants in France and their relationship to childhood leukemia. There is a direct relationship, Speaker. If the member is concerned about energy and health studies, where is the motion calling for a moratorium on any further nuclear development until the health studies are done? There is still no proven way to store radioactive waste from nuclear plants safely for tens of thousands of years. There's growing concern about the siting of gas plants which are less polluting than coal but still generate significant greenhouse gas emissions. Moreover, the shift towards shale gas exploration has raised significant environmental concerns, such as the potential contamination of groundwater.

1530

In this province, Ontario used to have a commitment to holding full environmental assessments of its long-term energy plan. The McGuinty government quietly removed that requirement in 2006. We need to reinstate that requirement so we can ensure the power mix in our long-term energy plan is one that minimizes health and environmental impacts.

Speaker, slowing down renewable power will hurt Ontario economically and environmentally. Renewable energy creates large numbers of jobs spread across the province. In Germany, over 350,000 renewable energy jobs have been created in the last few decades. As many in this House may well be aware, Germany, Switzerland and Belgium are phasing out nuclear power. They understand the costs and the risks.

If we're going to have an energy sector in Ontario that builds our economy and deals with our environmental and health problems, this motion will be a setback.

Renewable energy is more affordable than investing in new gas or nuclear. The Pembina Institute recently found that cancelling the Green Energy Act would lead to higher hydro costs over the long term. People often say that renewable energy is more expensive than the power rates on the spot electricity market, but wind and solar prices are falling, while nuclear and gas costs are projected to rise. According to the chief executive at Bloomberg New Energy Finance, the price of photovoltaic modules fell by close to 50% during 2011, and now stands 75% lower than in 2008.

Speaker, we fail to take into account the heavy subsidies for traditional sources of power when we talk about the cost of electricity. The federal government provided $20 billion in historic subsidies to nuclear power, including $650 million in 2009 alone. The federal government also picks up the tab for any liabilities of over $75 million in the event of a nuclear accident. I will note that the Fukushima accident is projected to cost a minimum of $3 billion.

The government should do more to maximize the economic benefits and minimize the health and environmental impacts of wind projects. The province is requiring significant setbacks for wind turbines, including a minimum of 550 metres to ensure noise levels do not exceed 40 decibels at the receptor. These are the largest setbacks in Canada, the United States and eight European countries. Proponents are required to monitor and address any perceptible infrasound as a condition of the renewable energy approval.

That said, there's more the McGuinty government could and must do. First and most important, the government should reduce the need for new energy generation by pursuing all possible conservation and efficiency measures.

Secondly, the government should give priority to community and First Nations, local co-operatives and community power projects which have community buy-in. Communities should control and benefit from wind projects, not companies that have no vested interest in those communities.

Lastly, Ontario needs to sit down with local communities and renewable power proponents to hammer out a consultation process that will work in this province.

Our colleagues were at the Ontario Good Roads/Rural Ontario Municipal Association meeting. It was clear those municipalities did not want to take on the responsibility for energy planning, but they did recognize the need for a better consultation regime. We need that here in Ontario. We need action on rebuilding our industry. We need to deal with climate change.

This motion will push us backwards. I urge everyone in this chamber to defeat it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Huron–Bruce has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank the members of my caucus who spoke up today in support of what Ontario wants: a moratorium on further wind development and industrial wind turbines until third party health and environmental studies are completed. We need the real, real results.

Specifically to the MPP from York–Simcoe, thank you for recognizing the time-sensitive issue this is. To my colleagues from Prince Edward–Hastings, Wellington–Halton Hills, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Nipissing and Nepean–Carleton, thank you for speaking up. Your constituents will be so proud of their provincial representatives today.

I also listened to the members from Richmond Hill, Mississauga–Streetsville and Toronto–Danforth, and I have to ask: How many turbines do they have in their ridings? Where are the government's and the third party's representatives from rural Ontario? Why were they not allowed to speak?

The member from Guelph has constituents here, and she wasn't even allowed to speak. I'm sure her constituents who are present today will be very interested to see how she votes.

But seriously, all of us here in this Legislature—

Mr. Grant Crack: What about subways in the rural areas?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Oh, don't get me started on that, because it's a two-way street there. People spoke out of both sides of their mouth—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Would you please address the Chair?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Earlier this week, Mr. Speaker, the government proved to be hypocrites when they chose to say the will of—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask you to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I withdraw.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have to protect those in the province who are looking to be positioned as collateral damage—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please.

HAWKINS GIGNAC ACT (CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS), 2012

LOI HAWKINS GIGNAC DE 2012 (DÉTECTEURS DE MONOXYDE DE CARBONE)

Mr. Hardeman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 20, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 to require carbon monoxide detectors in certain residential buildings / Projet de loi 20, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment pour exiger l'installation de détecteurs de monoxyde de carbone dans certains immeubles d'habitation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise once again to speak to the Hawkins Gignac Act because this bill will ensure Ontario families are protected by having carbon monoxide detectors in their homes, and it will save lives.

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas that is colourless, odourless and has no taste. Most of us have a potential source of this gas in our homes—a furnace, space heater, gas stove, hot water heater or even the garage where we warm up our cars in the winter. Without a detector, you have no way of knowing when your house is filling with poisonous gas.

Currently, the Ontario building code only requires carbon monoxide alarms in homes that are built after August 6, 2001. That leaves too many families at risk. The Hawkins Gignac Act would require carbon monoxide detectors in all Ontario homes that have a fuel-burning appliance or an attached garage.

Andy Glynn, deputy chief of Oakville and representative of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, says, "This bill has the support of fire chiefs across the province because all families, regardless of the age of their home, need protection from this silent killer."

I was pleased that recently Safe Kids Canada declared their support for the bill. This is the national injury prevention program of the Hospital for Sick Children. They said, "The same safety provisions should apply across the province. The safety of Ontario families should not depend on the location or age of their homes."

As we work to make our homes more airtight and energy-efficient, the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning continues to increase. Three years ago, Ontario's chief coroner investigated the death of a Sudbury woman due to carbon monoxide poisoning.

As a result, he recommended that carbon monoxide alarms be installed on every level of every home. This is similar to the recommendations of several coroner inquiries.

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A week ago in Florida, an elderly couple passed away in their home. It is believed they were poisoned by carbon monoxide from a car running in their garage.

They were not required to have carbon monoxide detectors in their home.

Just over three years ago in my riding of Oxford, we experienced a tragic consequence of not having carbon monoxide detectors in your home when we lost Laurie and Richard Hawkins and their two children, Cassandra and Jordan. As an OPP community relations officer, Constable Hawkins touched the lives of many people throughout Oxford, particularly in schools, where she taught the VIP program: values, influences and peers.

Years after being part of the VIP program, students mentioned to their teachers the great impact that Laurie had on them. In fact, the first time that we debated this bill—and I want to point out that this is the third time—many of the students whom she taught were here in the public gallery to see this happen.

Laurie's impact was recognized recently when the Thames Valley District School Board decided to name a new school in Ingersoll in her honour.

Richard Hawkins was an accomplished hockey player and shared that passion as coach of the local hockey team. He was an active member of the community and a dedicated father.

Cassandra was a grade 9 student. She was a member of the social justice league and enjoyed figure skating and swimming.

Jordan was 12 years old and already working as a paper boy. He played hockey and loved camping, swimming and fishing.

The family had been feeling ill for several weeks and thought they had all come down with the flu. Mr. Speaker, that's one of the factors that makes carbon monoxide so dangerous. It's almost impossible to detect early symptoms; headaches, fatigue and dizziness are similar to the flu. In fact, the Hawkins family was suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning. The exhaust on the basement fireplace had become blocked and was filling their home with carbon monoxide.

Following the tragedy, Laurie's uncle, John Gignac, who is in the gallery today, committed to preventing other families from experiencing the same loss. He founded the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation for CO Education, which increases awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide and raises funds for the purchase of carbon monoxide detectors to be distributed through fire departments.

Last month, the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation reached out to provide assistance in the wake of another tragedy in the Yukon: A family of four and their tenant were killed by carbon monoxide. Following the tragedy, the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation provided carbon monoxide detectors to ensure that those in the community who could not afford one would be protected against carbon monoxide.

Last fall, John Gignac joined me in my riding of Oxford, where we made a similar donation. I want to thank John for his support for this bill over the last three years and all the efforts on the issue.

I first introduced this bill in 2008, only a few days after the tragic loss of the Hawkins family. The bill passed second reading on April 2, 2009, and was referred to committee. It died on the order paper when Premier McGuinty prorogued the House in March 2010.

A few months later, in May, I reintroduced the Hawkins Gignac Act, Bill 69. In December, it once again passed second reading and was referred to committee. It died on the order paper again when the Legislature prorogued in 2011.

Today, I'm asking for the support of the Legislature—not just for second reading, but to help me move this bill forward through committee and through third reading. The time has come, Mr. Speaker.

Over the three years since I first introduced the Hawkins Gignac Act, I've heard from many people and organizations about the need for carbon monoxide detectors, and I've received many comments and suggestions on the bill. I want to thank everyone who took time to share their thoughts. I was pleased to incurporate many of those recommendations in Bill 20 to ensure that we are protecting Ontario families without placing any unnecessary burden on people who are not in danger of carbon monoxide poisoning.

This bill would only require detectors in homes that have a potential source of carbon monoxide, such as fuel-burning appliances or an attached garage. Homes that are all electric with no garage would not be required to have a detector.

For multi-residential units, detectors would only be required in suites where there is a fuel-burning appliance, or suites that are adjacent to the storage garage or service room with fuel-burning appliances.

I want to thank the Federation of Rental-housing Providers for working with me on this new version of the bill and for their extensive input.

For new homes, carbon monoxide detectors must be hard-wired and interconnected. We recognize that this would be cost-prohibitive in existing homes, and so for these homes a battery-operated or plug-in carbon monoxide detector would be acceptable.

Carbon monoxide detectors range in price, but there are models available for $20 or $25: not a high price to pay to protect lives. I know the people across Ontario accepted the importance of having smoke detectors at every level of their home. I hope that we can make people aware of the need for the same with carbon monoxide alarms.

While I have been working to get this legislation through the Legislature, many municipalities have taken the initiative to protect their citizens, enacting bylaws to require these carbon monoxide alarms. I want to commend municipalities, such as Niagara Falls, Mississauga, Caledon, North Bay, Pickering, Georgina and Sault Ste. Marie, that have taken the steps—and I know that there are more that are considering it. In fact, just this week, my home municipality of South-West Oxford passed a bylaw requiring carbon monoxide detectors.

Over the past few years, there have been numerous stories about families who have been saved because there was a bylaw in place and their family installed the detector. Dana Melanson bought a carbon monoxide detector to comply with the bylaw in her town of Sault Ste. Marie. Last summer it started going off, so she called the fire department, who discovered that a family hot water heater was filling their home with carbon monoxide. If she hadn't heard the detector, it could well have been another tragedy.

In December, a Keswick family was also saved by their detector going off. The Georgina fire department responded and the deputy fire chief said, "If this family had not had a working carbon monoxide alarm and responded as they did, the outcome may have been fatal."

Around the same time, the town of Ingersoll, in my riding of Oxford, passed a bylaw requiring carbon monoxide detectors in all homes with fuel-burning appliances or attached garages. Ingersoll Fire Chief Darell Parker said, "It is our hope that the province would pass the legislation, but with the risks involved it's important we step up and make a statement."

Mr. Speaker, these detectors save lives. Do we really only want Ontario families to have that protection if they live in certain towns? While I commend these municipalities for taking the initiative, those bylaws don't take the place of a provincial law. All Ontario families should be protected against carbon monoxide, not just those who live in new houses or certain municipalities.

As we worked with the Federation of Rental-housing Providers to refine the section of the bill that deals with multi-residential units, we researched a number of these municipal bylaws. Each one puts different requirements on the landlord; different rules in different municipalities create red tape and confusion. Our goal should be to create a situation that makes it as easy as possible for people to comply with the law and protect Ontarians against carbon monoxide poisoning. That is why we need to move forward with the Hawkins Gignac Act.

I appreciate all the support and the many people who have worked to help us raise awareness about the need for detectors, including numerous fire chiefs, municipal politicians and safety experts. David Thomson, past president of Firefighters Association of Ontario, said, "Carbon monoxide is known as the silent killer. With the introduction of the Hawkins Gignac Act, this will ensure that all homes in Ontario will have early detection on all levels of residences and that they are installed and maintained properly."

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that makes carbon monoxide poisoning so tragic is that it is preventable. Over the last three years, many more people have become aware of the need for carbon monoxide detectors, and I'm pleased that so many families have made the decision to ensure they are protected, but there are still far too many people at risk. I want to encourage everyone who is listening to this debate today, here and at home, not to wait for the legislation to pass, but to make sure that they and their loved ones have working carbon monoxide detectors in their homes as soon as possible. Working together, we can prevent more tragedies. Working together, we can raise awareness, move this bill forward to committee and ensure that we can protect Ontario's families from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to share my time with the member from Timmins–James Bay.

It's my honour to speak on this issue today. I'd like to first start by—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thanking Uncle Ernie.

Mr. John Vanthof: No; by paying tribute to Mr. Gignac, who has worked tirelessly for bringing this issue forward—and also thanking my uncle Ernie.

Applause.

Mr. John Vanthof: I am one of the people who knew early on how stubborn that man is, and it's turning out to be a good thing.

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All jokes aside, this is an incredibly serious issue, and I'm not going to replay what the member for Oxford just said. He knows this issue very well, as do most of the members in this House, because it's come to my attention—I'm new here—that this is the third time this bill has been brought forward. As I look through Hansard, it's the third time that excellent arguments have been brought forward. It's the third time that people have had to sit in the gallery and listen to those excellent arguments.

What really struck me is—today we've had some controversial subjects—this one isn't controversial. Carbon monoxide kills. This isn't rocket science. This isn't argued in any country. Anyone will tell you the same thing. I don't think anyone is going to argue. This is a good bill.

It's great if everybody puts them in voluntarily, but in the real world, that doesn't happen. We all know that. And we all know that in the real world, when we don't do things like this, people die.

I'd like to thank the member for Oxford and Mr. Gignac for bringing this bill forward once again. This isn't the type of bill that's made to divide people. It isn't the type of bill that's made for political points—to score some or lose some. This is the type of bill that, it's identified, can actually help people, save people.

That it's had to be brought forward for the third time shows that perhaps not only do we have to try harder to pass bills like this—maybe because I'm new here, I don't really understand the process, but there's got to be a way in this Legislature, in the committees, that bills like this that make sense somehow don't get lost in the shuffle. I know there are better terms for that, but for people who really aren't used to government, there are lots of committees, and things tend to get overrun by the bigger issues.

This isn't a little issue. This is probably—not probably—this is the most important issue we'll deal with today, because this is the only issue that will kill people. It could kill someone tonight, and that's why this issue is so important. It's so important that we all work together to make sure that bills like this proceed in a manner that they're expedited. On a bill where we can all agree—we've all agreed, all the parties have agreed twice already. I presume—I'm pretty sure—we'll agree the third time in this House.

It's the will of the House that we save people's lives. So it should be the will of the House that after it passes this House, passes second reading, that somehow we can put a rush on it. You know, put a rush on it, put a stamp on it: This one is important. So I urge everyone in this House to vote for this bill.

I'd really like to thank Mr. Gignac for everything he's done. I know my uncle would do the same for me, I think. But it's really important. I wish you wouldn't have to be sitting there. I hope that no one else—I hope you don't have to sit there again. I hope this doesn't have to be read a fourth time. Let's get together and let's pass it into law.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: Thank you. I wasn't expecting to be called this early.

It's my pleasure to speak in support of this bill. We've heard from members in the House that this is now the third time that this issue has come up before the Legislature. I took the occasion to dig out Hansard for the previous debates, which I have here in my hand. I've read the speeches of the then-MPPs in support of it from the Liberal side, the Conservative side and the NDP side. I read all the speeches through. Everybody agreed that this was, to use the expression commonly used on the street, a no-brainer. Why wouldn't anybody, any reasonable thinking person, not want to support this bill?

Here's what it says in the introduction. It's a very simple bill. The bill amends the Building Code Act, 1992—that's the code that governs the construction of buildings here in Ontario—to require the owners of residential buildings—what's a residential building? Well, that's where people live—we live, our children live, our grandparents live. That's where people live: residential buildings. So, any residential buildings that contain a fuel-burning device or a storage garage—because often stuff gets stuffed in these storage garages and is left there for months and sometimes years, and stuff happens, spontaneous combustion, and away we go; we've got a nasty fire—to install a carbon monoxide detector in the building, and that's not an expensive item, and to maintain them in operating condition. Then it sets out how you go about it.

Every year, in Ontario, we read about some tragedies of carbon monoxide accidents. Somebody has gone to bed and carbon monoxide has leaked out through the furnace or whatever the device is, and there are deaths. There are deaths of seniors and there are deaths of middle-aged persons and there are deaths of children. Everybody reads it in the paper. I read it in the paper myself, and I say, "How could this happen? What an awful tragedy." Could you imagine this happening to members of your family? And then you read on in the paper and you see that one of two things has happened: Typically, there has not been a carbon monoxide detector installed, or there was a carbon monoxide device installed but it was in disrepair. It was not connected; it was not maintained; it wasn't working. And then I give my head a shake, and I say, "For the sake of having a carbon monoxide detector installed and for the sake of maintaining it, what little trouble and expense that is, think of the lives that it could have saved." Yet, for some strange reason, here in Ontario, we don't have that simple requirement in the building code. I just have to scratch my head, time and time again, why we wouldn't have that in the building code.

I circle back to my point that I think, for all of us, it's a no-brainer. I went back, and as I say, I read over the transcript of the previous two occasions that the bill came before the House at various times, and I read what Liberal MPPs, New Democratic MPPs and Conservative MPPs had to say. Essentially, they went on for five, 10 or 15 minutes, but they made the same point: Look, this saves lives; it's efficient; it's not a big deal to install it; it's not a big deal to maintain it; but the payback in terms of preventing tragedies that we read about in the paper is so enormous. I read through the debates, and I came to the conclusion that those people, on the previous occasions that it came before this House, also thought it was a no-brainer.

It's such a no-brainer that a number of municipalities—because the rules permit the municipalities to put a local requirement in their building codes, and any number of municipalities have done that. If memory serves me correctly—and I stand to be corrected here—I think, for instance, Niagara Falls is—yes. The member opposite is nodding. So I take the example of Niagara Falls, because that springs to mind. If the city of Niagara Falls, in its wisdom, has this amendment in its building code and requires carbon monoxide detectors, I don't, for the life of me, understand why other municipalities wouldn't do the same, and I know that, throughout Ontario, a number of municipalities have. If the municipality of Niagara Falls and other municipalities have done it because they see the wisdom in it, and I've said that I don't see why other municipalities wouldn't do it, why wouldn't the province do it also, just as a matter of logic?

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So for these reasons, I commend the member opposite for bringing this bill forward. I point out that it received all-party support the last two occasions that it came before, and I expect that it's going to have all-party support here, because it is a no-brainer. It saves lives and it's easy to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I stand with my colleagues in the House today to speak in favour of Bill 20, the Hawkins Gignac Act.

It's before the Legislature, as you've heard, for the third time, thanks to the perseverance of my colleague from Oxford and the members of the families here, whose only purpose is to ensure that a tragedy like the one that took the lives of Constable Laurie Hawkins, her husband, Richard, their two children, Cassandra and Jordan, never, ever happens again.

Laurie and Richard were former residents of my hometown of North Bay, and this tragedy touched many in the community who knew them. As mayor of the city of North Bay at that time—our community was determined to do something to try to ensure we never see anything like this happen to another family. In March 2009, North Bay city council enacted a bylaw making it mandatory for any home with a fuel-fired appliance to have a working carbon monoxide detector.

The awareness raised through the attempts to pass the Hawkins Gignac Act in my community has saved lives and will continue to save lives, and passage of this legislation will do likewise across Ontario.

Speaker, the North Bay fire department issued a press release on January 27 of this year, stating that in that month alone, they had received 17 carbon monoxide alarm calls. Of those, four had confirmed levels of carbon monoxide in their home—four potential tragedies averted. Perhaps the members in this Legislature may want to check with their fire departments in their ridings to see how prevalent this problem is.

One of those four calls came on January 23. Colleen Point, a high school teacher in North Bay, said she was feeling nauseous but thought she was just coming down with a bug and didn't want to give it any further thought. Her husband, Gary, at the same time was complaining about a tingling sensation. Their nine-year-old daughter, Rachel, awoke, also feeling nauseous. Their CO alarm went off. It had a digital reading, which was steadily climbing, so this family of five got dressed and left the house. Thankfully, they had a CO alarm and took that alarm seriously.

CO detectors do save lives. I can't understand why anyone would object to having a device that can save a life. How can anyone not afford to have one in their home?

I want to take this opportunity to remind northern and rural residents in Ontario who have seen a lot of snow over the past couple weeks, please periodically check the exterior vents of your home, to make sure they're clear of snow and ice. This is one of the biggest dangers we face when it comes to possible carbon monoxide poisoning, and the importance of this message cannot be stressed enough.

Speaker, I wholeheartedly support the Hawkins Gignac Act, and I implore my fellow members to support it as well. Together, Speaker, we will save lives.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, I want to say that my colleague, our whip, Mrs. DiNovo, wants a few minutes on this, so I'm going to come right to the point.

One is, I support the bill. I think it's a good initiative. I've had the personal circumstance in our own home where my wife and I decided to go out and buy one of these things. We just happened to be at Canadian Tire one day and we said, "Let's put it in the basket." We installed it. We put one in the hallway upstairs and we put one down in the basement. My wife calls me here at Queen's Park a couple of years ago and says, "Jesus Jiminy, there's a noise down in the basement. What's it all about?" I say, "I don't know." We had forgotten we had plugged this thing in. It turns out that the vent for our hot water tank—there was something going on with it and natural gas was flowing back into the building, not natural gas but the fumes from burning whatever it is—carbon dioxide.

Anyway, the long and the short of the story is, the fire department showed up and found in fact there was a problem and we eventually corrected that, the point being if that thing hadn't gone off, who knows what would have happened? Would it have been my wife? Would it have been my wife and I? Would it have been the kids, the grandkids today? Who knows? These things do save lives, so I wholeheartedly support.

But I want to speak to the point that my good friend Mr. Vanthof from Timiskaming–Cochrane raised, and that is, the inability of members in the opposition to get bills passed. We have bills in the House today, all of which are good, depending on which side of the issue you find yourself on. You've got Mr. Hardeman who's got his bill on carbon dioxide. You've got the member from—

Ms. Laurie Scott: Huron–Bruce.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Huron–Bruce—excuse me; I'd never be the Speaker because I can't remember ridings—who has a motion that's important to many, but even if it did pass in this Legislature, it wouldn't get anywhere, and that is because there's a failure in this Legislature to have rules that allow members to do their jobs. Essentially, I agree that in the end, government has to have the ability to be the one who introduces bills and motions. I understand the principle of Parliament, but there's got to be some way found so that the member from Huron–Bruce, the member from Haldimand–Norfolk or the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, when they bring issues before the House that are supportable by this Legislature, there's a way of moving forward, and I think that's rather regrettable. In the case of Mr. Hardeman, this might probably be more than strike three. It's only in our time—and I've been in this place for 22 years. I think I've seen it four or five times that members have brought this issue up before the House. It's a good idea and everybody supports it, but it doesn't get forward.

I think we have a prime opportunity in the Legislative Assembly committee. The House leaders have agreed to refer the standing orders to the Legislative Assembly committee so that we can look at how members can do

their job and represent their constituents. I think that is something that needs to be done. We need to find some way to balance off the tradition of Parliament where government has to have its way in the end, to where the opposition and individual members from either the government side or the opposition side of the House have some mechanism of moving bills forward, so that they can actually be passed into law, as in the case with the member from Norfolk.

I look at Mr. Prue. Mr. Prue, our member from Beaches–East York, had a bill to ban wooden fire escapes—wooden fire escapes. Everybody voted in favour. How many times? At least twice that I can think of. It never got passed. It got passed at second reading, but we can never get it into committee to do any work and it never got past third reading.

The member from Hamilton wherever, Mr. Miller, the Acting Speaker, has one in regard to sprinklers in retirement homes. Everybody agrees.

I look at our friends who are here from across southwestern and southeastern Ontario on the windmill issue. Even if the motion passed, it wouldn't mean anything. That's the sad reality of this place. I understand your issue is important to you, you feel strongly and you want to see this Legislature do something for you, and even if the bill passed at the end of the day or the motion passed, it wouldn't do anything because, at the end, it is only the government that has the power to say, "Yes, we're going to do X, Y or Z" with the motion or the bill that's brought forward.

I think we need to challenge ourselves as members as we work on the Legislative Assembly committee so that members of this House know, once you bring a bill or motion to this House and it passes the test of this House at second reading, there's a way to move it forward so that, in fact, you can enact it into law or you can make a difference for people's lives. I just look forward to that day where these debates are a little bit more meaningful.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. I think this is an example of where the Legislature is often at its best when it comes to private members' business, because it allows from time to time the opportunity to put some of the partisan nature of debate aside and deal with issues of a very practical nature.

The member from Oxford today, I think, brings forward a bill that is very practical in nature and has the potential to avoid a lot of tragedy. If there are any lessons to be learned from the tragedies that have occurred in our past, one of them is that a private member's bill in this regard would be a good way to move this issue forward and ensure that those tragedies don't happen in the future.

I want to take this opportunity also to talk about private members' bills in general. I listened with some interest to the member from Timmins–James Bay, and I certainly agreed with some of the sentiments as to finding a method to move private members' business beyond this stage and actually to the point where it did see the light of day and turn into good legislation.

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Often the people we use in our offices—or the people that some of us use in our offices, and I'm not sure if there was a person involved in this—are legislative interns, who get to work on the private member's bill. Part of being a legislative intern is that for half your term you work with a member of the government and for the other half you work with a member of the opposition. Today is the last day for legislative interns, and those who are working for the government will now go and work for the opposition and those who are working for the opposition will now go and work for the government.

I've had a fantastic intern; his name is Evan Akriotis. He has worked with me at the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. I've got private members' bills that are coming up in the future as well, and Evan has done a fantastic job in doing the research on that. I think the experience of the internship will allow him to see the way that this entire House should operate. I think private members' bills give us that opportunity.

There's a law school in Evan's future. He has been out to my Oakville constituency. I don't know where Evan is going next, but he's going to an opposition member's riding and office. I've been very impressed with his research skills, his enthusiasm.

Tomorrow, all the interns fly to London and visit Westminster to see the source of parliamentary democracy—

Interjection.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: That's right; I'd be loving that trip too.

But I think this bill is a very practical example of how this House can work in a way that makes a difference in the everyday lives of Ontarians. As technology has advanced, the cost of technology has advanced; these devices now are within the reach of the average person in Ontario. At some point in the past, I'm sure that these would have been a fairly expensive purchase for somebody in Ontario; now that's not the case.

I'm sure, as in most cases like this where members suggest that the government intervene a little bit in the private lives of citizens, there's a range of opinions. Some people will think we should be intimately involved and some people think we shouldn't be involved at all.

From time to time in this House, members have talked about the war on the dandelion, when we were trying to do something about pesticides. Most members have spoken in favour of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, some have spoken against. Some people who wanted to be in this House said at one point that smoking in cars with children was going a bit too far and that perhaps we shouldn't do anything about that.

I think today we're presented with an example where that sensible, non-partisan middle says that this is the right amount of intervention for the government in the

lives of its citizens because it's going to prevent tragedies in the future.

I think the member from Oxford brought forward the case that it has the support of the firefighting community, that the chiefs and the association are people that support this because when these things are not installed or if these devices fail, the people at the end of the day that we rely on to go into those unsafe situations are the firefighters themselves. It seems to me that they would see this at its worst. They would see the consequences of not having these installed. If they're in support of these, I think it behooves everybody in this House to get behind the firefighting community and throw their support behind it as well.

I think as Ontario families work hard and they go about very busy lives, our government is also working hard too to not intervene too much in their lives and not stay completely out of their lives but to find that sensible point where we do get into the homes, where we do do inspections in the homes. But I think, even above and beyond the legislation itself, we should be encouraging all residents to install a carbon monoxide detector in their home in advance of the legislation. It's something I think that's a proven aid to saving lives.

We're concerned about the safety of all Ontarians. I don't think that's anything peculiar to the Liberal Party, to the Progressive Conservative Party or to the New Democratic Party. I think all members of this House would like to see legislation introduced that's practical in nature, that makes a difference in the lives of ordinary Ontarians and ensures that the tragedies and the deaths that have occurred in the past need not occur in the future.

My support is solidly behind the member from Oxford. I would like to see this debated at committee, and I would like to see it move on to third reading and become law. I would urge all members to support the motion that's on the floor. Once again, I commend the member from Oxford for his tenacity in bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak in support of this important act, Bill 20, the Hawkins Gignac Act, that will require carbon monoxide detectors in all residential buildings. I applaud, as well, the member from Oxford for his foresight and tenacity in redrafting, in the first place, and reintroducing this bill. The third time's the charm, member from Oxford.

Previous legislators who sat exactly where we sit today had the wherewithal and good judgment to enact legislation that serves to protect Ontarians from potential threats in homes and businesses. Mr. Speaker, those members passed important legislation that required fire alarms in all homes and carbon monoxide detectors in new homes and buildings. Those members at that time saw that by enacting a simple piece of legislation, they could increase safety in our homes. This important action has saved the lives of countless numbers of individuals and families from undue tragedy and grief that have befallen far too many before.

I was fortunate enough in my former employment to work for a very thoughtful employer who every year would make a different safety gift to employees, myself included at the time. One of those one year was carbon monoxide detectors, so there are a number of those in my home that are still there from that time and also that we've replaced over the years. So that employer was very thoughtful and looking forward to the future.

I encourage every member of this Legislature to check and make sure that they, too, have carbon monoxide detectors in their home and that they are fully operational.

Carbon monoxide is often called the silent killer because it gives no clear warnings of its presence to its victims. It's an invisible gas with no taste or smell. Without carbon monoxide alarms, families are unable to detect the presence of this poisonous gas in any concentration.

Carbon monoxide is produced by many different devices that we find in our homes. Compounding the issue is the fact that the same technology that allows us to seal up leaks in our homes and prevent energy loss can also have the effect of corralling harmful gases until they reach lethal levels. As such, it is absolutely essential that we have carbon monoxide detectors in our homes to detect any of these dangerous toxins.

I'd like to touch on several troubling statistics that I found while I was researching Bill 20. Carbon monoxide is the number one cause of accidental poisoning deaths in North America. Close to 15% of the incidents investigated by the TSSA involve carbon monoxide. Studies have shown that each year, some 13,000 Canadians experience some level of carbon monoxide poisoning.

By enacting this simple piece of legislation, Bill 20, we will be doing our part to prevent any other families from experiencing the tragedy that befell the Hawkins-Gignac family in late 2008. Richard, Laurie, Cassandra and Jordan were all overcome by carbon monoxide because a seemingly benign exhaust vent on a gas fireplace had become blocked, simply from years of use. Like any other Canadian who heats their home for comfort, this family had no expectation that simply warming the basement could put them a risk.

I commend the member from Oxford for his commitment to this important piece of legislation. I want to thank all the family members who are here today, who have worked so hard to see this important piece of legislation become law.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation, when passed, will provide a simple and effective level of protection for our families. I urge all parties to support Bill 20, the Hawkins Gignac Act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I remember extremely vividly the first time I uttered the words "carbon monoxide" and knew anything about a carbon monoxide detector. It was

when my husband and I first moved back to Toronto after living in the country for a while. We were living in rental quarters. All of a sudden a beep, beep, beep went off in the basement. We had no idea what it was. There were obviously no flames or smoke around. We looked. We didn't even know what the detector was detecting and, quite frankly, we didn't phone 911. Within minutes, the fire department, the paramedics, everyone had descended on our street, had blocked off the street and informed us that, had this happened and we didn't have a carbon monoxide detector and we had been sleep, my husband, myself and our two small children would all be dead—couldn't smell anything, couldn't detect anything. That's when I learned about carbon monoxide, and that's when I learned about the value and the importance of having a carbon monoxide detector.

Mr. Speaker, I've told this story before in this House, and I've only been here six years. The sad reality is the member from Oxford has brought this forward before, not only once but twice before. The sad reality is that both times before it has been supported by every member of this House. So here we are again, déjà vu all over again.

1620

The issue here—and people should know this—is with the government. It is still, in a minority government, the government's prerogative to bring bills forward for third reading. So I would ask of my friends across the aisle that not only you support the member from Oxford in this bill, but that you actually put pressure on your own cabinet to bring this bill back for third reading so that poor Mr. Uncle Ernie from Oxford doesn't have to stand up and do it for the fourth time and I don't have to tell this scary story yet again. Surely, before the member from Oxford retires, we can also retire this discussion and keep the members of our households in Ontario safe.

So, yes, we support it. Let's get it done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise yet again today, this time to speak to my colleague from Oxford's private member's bill, the Hawkins Gignac Act. It's the third time it's been brought in, and that's been said many, many times. This hopefully is the last time that we discuss it in the Legislature, and it does become law. Thank you to the family members for coming yet again to the Legislature to support the member from Oxford—or Uncle Ernie to some in the Legislature.

The bill would require mandatory, functioning carbon monoxide detectors in all Ontario homes that have a fuel-burning appliance or attached garage. Currently, detectors are only required in homes built after August 2001, putting many Ontario families at risk. I think that we've heard a lot about carbon monoxide, but just for those who are tuning in at home, it is a product of combustion of organic matter under conditions of restricted oxygen supply.

We don't want to bring every bill back three times, but at least the education component does keep going about carbon monoxide and the harm that it does bring, and how lots of people forget about carbon monoxide and the poisoning—it is the silent killer—and the tragic stories that we hear again and again throughout our ridings; I know as a nurse, receiving patients in emergency, many times too late. It is the time to bring in a provincial law that does put mandatory carbon monoxide detectors in people's homes.

There also can be long-term, slow carbon monoxide poisoning that can exist, so people, especially pregnant women—the effects on the fetus; chronic diseases where you think they're chronic diseases, but they're actually chronic exposure to carbon monoxide poisoning, some of it being confusion and memory loss, which certainly can be thought to be something else with people.

In my own riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, the city of Kawartha Lakes emergency medical services chief, Keith Kirkpatrick, told me of two tragic instances resulting in fatalities in 2008 and 2009. Of course, as I have many emergency services, I contacted them about the bill: Brock township; the county of Peterborough, in which I have Galway-Cavendish and Harvey; north Kawartha; and Cavan Monaghan—all telling me stories that are tragic and all very supportive of this bill being brought forward today that would save lives.

I want to also mention a private member's bill, because a lot has been mentioned about private members' bills and how they don't go any further. Several times in the Legislature, it's been brought in about visual alarms: strobe lighting for the deaf and hard-of-hearing in the province of Ontario. Right now, they do need some assistance—some people who are deaf and hard of hearing—getting these smoke detectors installed to save their lives, so they can be visual alarms to them—strobe lighting in this situation. The same applies with carbon monoxide detectors, Mr. Speaker. Again, I think that bill has been brought forward by maybe all three parties and has not yet seen productive, I would say, amendments. I don't even know if it really needs to be legislation, but amendments to either the assistive device program—just the awareness of it. I know the Canadian Hearing Society, of which I was for a short time a provincial board member—I have members of my family that are deaf. This needs to be brought forward again to keep in the forefront and maybe hopefully get some movement on the government side on this very important part of society. Their lives are in jeopardy just because they need visual aids for smoke alarms and maybe carbon monoxide alarms.

So I want to again thank the member from Oxford for his tenacity in moving this bill forward. I'm sure he'll enjoy all-party support here today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oxford, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I would like to thank all the gracious speakers who spoke to the bill, without eliminating

anyone—everyone speaking solidly in favour of the bill. I'm going to make the assumption that the only reason that the rest of the members of the Legislature didn't get a chance to speak is because we ran out of time. So I won't name them all. I just hope that all the ones that didn't get to speak are as supportive of the bill as those that did.

There was one thing that I think is very important that I mentioned: The support that I've had from the fire services, in all three times that I've had this bill forward, is so important, because they are the people that get the calls, both in the cases where there are carbon monoxide detectors and in the cases where they aren't. And the difference between the two calls is the reason that all the fire services are behind doing this.

The other thing that was mentioned by the member from Willowdale, about the situation of the municipalities not doing it, the challenge, of course, is that it's part of the building code, and municipalities don't deal with the building code. They can pass a law, but it doesn't deal with the similarities between municipalities, so you have one standard in one municipality and one standard in the other, and that's not going to be very helpful.

Last, but not least, I think it's very important to recognize the issue of retroactivity. I mentioned in my presentation the year 2001. That's when they became mandatory in all residential buildings in the province—smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. They made smoke detectors retroactive so it would be all residential; they didn't do that for carbon monoxide. Only that group of housing or that group of residential units that were built prior to 2001 still have smoke detectors mandatory, but not carbon monoxide. I believe we should all have the same protection in every municipality and every dwelling unit in this province.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The time for private members' public business has come to an end.

Before we take the votes, I'd ask all members of the Legislature to join me in thanking this wonderful group of pages for the work they've done for us in the last three weeks.

Applause.

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR ISAAC BROCK DAY ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE JOUR DU MAJOR-GÉNÉRAL SIR ISAAC BROCK

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item 16, standing in the name of Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark has moved second reading of Bill 35. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

MAJOR-GENERAL SIR ISAAC BROCK DAY ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE JOUR DU MAJOR-GÉNÉRAL SIR ISAAC BROCK

Mr. Clark moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to proclaim October 13 in each year as Major-General Sir Isaac Brock Day in Ontario / Projet de loi 35, Loi visant à proclamer le 13 octobre de chaque année Jour du major-général Sir Isaac Brock en Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

WIND TURBINES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Thompson has moved private member's notice of motion 8. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will deal with the vote at the end of other business.

HAWKINS GIGNAC ACT (CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS), 2012

LOI HAWKINS GIGNAC DE 2012 (DÉTECTEURS DE MONOXYDE DE CARBONE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Hardeman has moved second reading of Bill 20. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to the committee of the whole.

The member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: To the committee on social justice—or social policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has moved that the bill be referred to social justice—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): —social policy? Social policy. Agreed? Agreed.

WIND TURBINES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll now deal with the vote. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1631 to 1636.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask members to take their seats?

Ms. Thompson has moved private members' notice of motion number 8. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Leone, Rob	Scott, Laurie
Barrett, Toby	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Thompson, Lisa M.
Clark, Steve	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Dunlop, Garfield	Milligan, Rob E.	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Christine	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Fedeli, Victor	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	
Jackson, Rod	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Delaney, Bob	Milloy, John
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Dhillon, Vic	Moridi, Reza
Bentley, Christopher	Dickson, Joe	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	DiNovo, Cheri	Orazietti, David
Best, Margarett	Duguid, Brad	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	Sandals, Liz
Bradley, James J.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Schein, Jonah
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hoskins, Eric	Singh, Jagmeet
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Sousa, Charles
Chiarelli, Bob	Jeffrey, Linda	Tabuns, Peter
Colle, Mike	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Coteau, Michael	Marchese, Rosario	Taylor, Monique
Crack, Grant	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Craitor, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Damerla, Dipika	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 28; the nays are 45.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until Monday—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Mr. Milloy has moved adjournment of the House. Does the motion carry?

This House stands adjourned until Monday, March 19, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1641.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margarett R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

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Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
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Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
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Soo Wong
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David Zimmer
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Donna H. Cansfield, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Shafiq Qaadri
Laura Albanese, Teresa J. Armstrong
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Paul Miller, Rob E. Milligan
Shafiq Qaadri
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Gilles Bisson, Donna H. Cansfield
Steve Clark, Garfield Dunlop
Jeff Leal, Lisa MacLeod
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Reza Moridi, Jerry J. Ouellette
Liz Sandals, Jagmeet Singh
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Michael Coteau, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Ted Chudleigh, Dipika Damerla
Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Ernie Hardeman, Tracy MacCharles
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Mr. Michael Coteau 1005
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Wind turbines
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Mr. Michael Coteau 1007
Youth offender facility
Mr. Rob E. Milligan 1007
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M. Bob Delaney 1007
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Mr. Toby Barrett 1008
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INTRODUCTION OF BILLS / DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI

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First reading agreed to 1008

MOTIONS

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PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Wind turbines
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Diagnostic services
Mme France Gélinas 1011
Wind turbines
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Première session, 40e législature

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Monday 19 March 2012

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 19 March 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 19 mars 2012

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

CONDUCT OF HOUSE PROCEEDINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Having been in the chair a short time now, I have observed that the period of time allotted for the introduction of visitors is sometimes used as an occasion to insert preambles that both take up time and on occasion contain a political message.

I want to take this opportunity to remind all members that there is a short, five-minute time period to introduce your visitors, and it should be used for that purpose only.

While I don't want to have to cut any member off during an introduction of their visitors, members who abuse this proceeding in the manner I have just described may leave me no choice.

I know that all members will be mindful of this as we go forward, while we introduce visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to welcome Ontario cattlemen from across the province who are here with us in the public gallery, as well as Rob Black and Kathie MacDonald from the Rural Ontario Institute.

I want to welcome them to Queen's Park on behalf of my colleagues and Tim Hudak, and I look forward to meeting with them this afternoon.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's really a pleasure to have a special welcome today to my niece, Paige Henriksen, who is here today with her classmates from the grade 5 class of Mrs. Sandy Gonsalvez at St. Matthew school in Oakville.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: It's a pleasure to welcome representatives from the Ontario Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services, an umbrella organization that represents 20 children's treatment centres in Ontario. I believe they are in the Speaker's gallery, or will be there shortly: Linda Kenny, the chief executive officer; Bob McKay, volunteer; and Caroline Stone, a board chair.

I also invite all MPPs to a reception at 11:30, hosted by this wonderful organization.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my pleasure to introduce Gail Palmer and her son, Michael, who's a grade 5 student at Dr. Ross Tilley Public School in Bowmanville. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's my privilege today to introduce the family of page Julia Cole. Here today is her dad, Greg Cole; her brother, William Cole; and her grandparents, Judy and Bob Cole. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce the parents of page Liam Donnelly—Shannon Donnelly and Shawn Donnelly—joining us here today from the great riding of Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to introduce young Sarah Zufelt from Havelock, Ontario, and her uncle, a dear friend of mine, Mr. John Hubble from Toronto.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This morning, I am pleased to welcome members of the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards to Queen's Park—so, welcome—including the chair, Dr. Alok Mukherjee and Henry Jensen, the first vice-president from Ottawa. Thank you for the important work you do in keeping our communities safe, and welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's my pleasure to introduce Bob Gordanier from the proud riding of Dufferin–Caledon as a member of the Dufferin Federation of Agriculture. Welcome, Bob.

Mr. Grant Crack: It gives me great pleasure today to welcome the Ontario Cattlemen's Association to Queen's Park today as part of the Rural Ontario Institute advanced agricultural leadership program. They're celebrating their 50th anniversary this year, and I want to take this opportunity to congratulate them, and the members who are here, on their continued leadership.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome Jim Cole from Shallow Lake—he's a member of the cattlemen's association and my cousin—and all of his colleagues in the gallery as well.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would also like to welcome members of the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards here to Queen's Park today for their lobby day. I know you'll be introducing someone I see in the Speaker's gallery, but—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Steal my thunder.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —I'm looking forward to it.

Mr. Steve Clark: I would like to introduce two of my constituents here with the delegation from the Ontario Cattlemen's Association: Kim Sytsma and Jodee Bolton. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rob Leone: I would like to introduce Amarjeet Gill, our candidate of record for Mississauga–Brampton South.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've already had you. We'll go down to Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'd like to introduce my friend Rob Black, who's here representing agriculture in Ontario.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to welcome, from the Ontario Cattlemen's Association from my riding, Warren Schneckenburger and Rose Stewart, who are here to take part at Queen's Park today. So, welcome.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce Sean Dawe from Orono. He's with the Ontario cattlemen. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have an introduction—sorry. I will take two more.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise again to welcome two of my constituents from Oxford, who joined me for the trip to Queen's Park today. In fact, they literally joined me on my drive in this morning: Dorothy Lipsit and Jack Graves from the great town of Tillsonburg.

1040

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Rob Unsworth with the Canadian Cattlemen's Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome all our guests.

As alluded to earlier—stealing some of my thunder—in the Speaker's gallery today we have my other brother: Joe Peters is here. Joe is here supporting his son Nicholas, who's a new page.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROVINCIAL DEBT

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. In 2003, when you ran to become Premier of the province, you promised that the debt would only go in one direction, and that was down. Since that time, Ontario's debt has doubled, and we're on pace to hitting $400 billion in debt within five years. I'll remind the Premier that Ontario's credit rating has been downgraded twice, and another rating agency has recently put us on negative outlook.

Premier, let me ask you: Can you tell us your view on the level of provincial debt and its impact on investments and job creation in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question, and I think it's an important topic for us to engage in. Of course, there's going to be a certain level of indebtedness that is always there. That is natural and understandable, and in fact it's appropriate. I think one of the issues, of course, is: How did that debt arise? Again, I'd refer my honourable colleague to the Drummond commission and the specific references to the fact that Ontario is, relatively speaking, a frugal province. In fact, Speaker, we are the lowest per capita spender in the entire country—I remind my honourable colleague about that—and we continue to create the most jobs in the country, which I think is, first and foremost, the most important consideration for Ontario families: how we're doing on the jobs front, and that we keep creating new jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: It is hard to believe that the Premier said that with a straight face. The Premier knows that we've shed some 60,000 full-time jobs since the election alone—about 300,000 in the manufacturing sector under your watch. Ontario's deficit is greater than all of the provinces combined. Premier, you say that it's natural to have debt; it certainly is far from natural to be heading towards a $400-billion debt in the province of Ontario.

I was in New York City last week. I met with leaders in global finance, men and women who spend their lives determining where they should invest. They look at international, economic and financial issues. They said that the number one thing for future investment is confidence: Does business have the confidence that a government has its fiscal house in order, have its debt under control?

Premier, let me ask you: Is reining in runaway spending and controlling our debt the number one priority for the McGuinty government?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, we'll be tackling the deficit in earnest, as my honourable colleague knows, in our budget, which marks the beginning of an important five-year plan. That will call upon all of us to make thoughtful, responsible and, in fact, smart choices.

I wonder if my honourable colleague, in his conversations with those individuals he tells us he was meeting with, mentioned to them that, when it came to a choice such as bringing an end to funding for the horse racing industry in Ontario, he indicated to them that he was prepared to make that difficult choice in order for us to make a step forward with respect to balancing our budget and ultimately getting our debt down.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: In the wake of what's happening in Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal, the people of Ontario expect a much more serious and thoughtful answer from the Premier of Ontario when it comes to the debt crisis here. Reining in government debt should be priority number one if we want to invite new investment and job creation in our province. Businesses know that governments with high levels of debt can't afford lower taxes; they can't afford to invest in infrastructure. The example of Greece and others is very clear that undisciplined governments can lose control at breakneck speed. Debt, Premier, will always catch up with you. The chickens eventually come home to roost.

There are things that are out of our control, but you can't let government spending become one of them. Premier, will you tell us today that reining in spending and balancing the books will be priority number one in your upcoming budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have some experience when it comes to dealing with deficits, because we in-

herited one from the previous government, Speaker. It took some time—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —but finally we eliminated—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to try to nip this in the bud. Please. Actually, there was even some heckling while the member was asking the question. So please keep it down.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, as I was saying, we have some experience when it comes to dealing with deficits. We inherited a deficit from the previous Conservative government. It took some time, but we eventually eliminated that deficit, and then we balanced our budget three times in a row.

I also want to bring to my honourable colleague's attention that Ontario remains the number one destination in all of Canada for foreign direct investment. In all of North America, we're second only to the state of California. So I think we are doing more than pulling our own weight—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, we've heard the same tired answers these last eight years, the same worn out talking points. Quite frankly, sir, I think the people of Ontario deserve much better answers.

Premier, you know that in 2012, you will be borrowing $35 billion to finance your debt. That's $35 billion that won't be invested in Ontario. Over the next five years, you'll be borrowing $100 billion more.

Shortly after the election, you and I sat down across the table to discuss structural changes to provincial spending. I gave you a number of ideas to reduce the size and cost of government, but since that time, you've rejected them one by one.

One of the clear lessons learned in international financial circles is that your credit is good until it isn't. You put it at risk when you don't get spending under control. That's the lesson in Greece, in Spain and in Portugal.

Premier, I don't want to see Ontario turn into the Greece of Canada. Will you balance the books in the upcoming budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, while the member opposite was in New York dissing Ontario, our bonds were selling at a record pace. You ought to stand up for this province. They're liquid; they're available.

He was part of a government that took Ontario's debt-to-GDP ratio from 20% to 32.1%. Since we've come to office, it has gone from 32% to 37.1%. There is a lot more to do. We will balance that budget. We've laid out a plan.

Let me give him some other talking points. "Ontario remains on track with its fiscal recovery plan.... While deficits are projected to continue ... better-than-expected results thus far and a supportive economic recovery have helped to lessen the impact on Ontario's debt-to-GDP ratio." That's Dominion Bond Rating Service. I'll give him the other quotes when he asks another question.

This is a great province, and we're going to make it even better with our next—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: We did get the same tired talking points of the last eight years. I guess we got a bit more volume from the finance minister. We didn't get any new information.

Finance Minister and Premier, you know you're issuing a $35-billion piece of debt to finance your runaway spending. We have a different view here: We believe that lower spending leads to balanced budgets. A balanced budget leads to confidence in the economy. It leads to business investment and job creation. Balanced budgets give room for tax relief so they can move that even further down the road.

I'm worried that the Premier and his finance minister sound a lot like the Greek politicians of 10 years ago and say they can simply kick this down the can. But, Premier, again, our credit is only good until it no longer is good, and the next—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —to the Ontario economy puts it all at risk with your borrowing. Premier, aren't you putting our economy at considerable risk with your continued overspending and big—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'll share another talking point with him: The confirmation "reflects the view of the province's better-than-expected fiscal results.... The province continues to have excellent access to capital markets during and after the recession as it's completed its borrowing program." That's Standard and Poor's, an independent credit rating agency.

We acknowledge that getting back to balance has to be a strong objective of this government. Our spending has gone up a lot.

1050

The federal government's spending, since the Conservatives took office, went up 65%. Ours went up by the same amount. Why? Because we worked together to fight the recession.

We have put forward a number of proposals to save money, and that leader and his party have been against all of them, Mr. Speaker. They talk a good game. They have no plan, no idea. This government has a plan to get us back to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: If I could, Speaker, let me take it back to the essence of the issue: the fiscal reality of the

international financial situation in 2012. I don't have to remind the Premier that we've already had two credit rating downgradings; a third recently put us on negative watch.

When I spoke to the credit rating agencies, I asked them what they'll be watching for in this upcoming budget and what we can do to hold off future downgrades. They said the answer is simple: a credible plan with structural reform. They said they'll be watching out for gimmicks, for one-offs that don't address underlying cost-pressure issues, and they tend to look out for one-time revenue enhancements that don't get to the underlying problem of spending too much money.

Premier, can you stand here today and guarantee that your budget will deliver actual structural reform—no one-off gimmicks, no one-off things—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —the problems? Will you actually reduce the size and cost of government in your upcoming budget?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, our budget will deliver structural reforms that will help get this province back to balance, protect our education and health systems, and build that better future. What's at question is whether or not that leader and his party will have the courage to vote in favour of it. They try to have it both ways. They tell you they want restraint. Then when they get an opportunity to support restraint, they don't support it.

I'll just remind the Leader of the Opposition of a few more quotes. Here's what Forbes magazine said: "Canada"—and by extension, Ontario—"ranks No. 1" as the best country for business. And guess what one of the reasons for that was? They said it's because of Ontario's reformed tax structure, which he was for, then he was against, then he was for. It's kind of like full-day learning. He was against it, then he's for it, then he's against it. Mr. Speaker, he's got more positions than the Kama Sutra.

We're going to balance the budget. We're going to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Today this government has once again announced sweeping changes to health care without consulting the people who are going to be affected. When the government brought in the LHINs, they promised an open and transparent review that would allow people to actually have a say. My question is a simple one: Why has that not happened?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. I was very pleased this morning to announce one of those structural reforms that I think all of us know we need to make to sustain health care, Speaker. We announced a reform to the way we fund hospitals so that hospitals will now be paid to provide care to patients. It seems pretty obvious, but it is not the way hospitals are currently funded.

Looking at 91 of our 152 hospitals, our largest hospitals, they will see changes in the way they are funded. We're working very hard to mitigate the transition, Speaker, so that hospitals will be able to make the changes they need in an orderly way. It's the right thing for patients, and patients understand that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I think everyone agrees that we need to constantly improve our health care system, but the everyday people who are stuck waiting in an emergency room want to see the kind of change that makes life actually better for them—and their wait times shorter—not a decision made behind closed doors to actually close their emergency room, which this government's quite effective at.

I want to know from this government, Speaker, why are they proceeding with sweeping changes to our hospitals, sweeping changes to our home care system, sweeping changes to our entire health care system, without listening at all to the very people who are going to be affected?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I fundamentally disagree with the assumption embedded in that question. We have listened very, very carefully to the people who are most directly affected by our health care system. Those are people who need more home care. Those are people who want shorter wait times. Those are people who want stronger primary care. We have listened very hard, and we are moving on the advice that we have received.

I can tell you the advice across this province is the same, Speaker. We've got to focus more on building supports in the community. We have to do a better job of building in more options for people so that they can leave the hospital when they're ready to leave the hospital with the supports they need to stay at home or stay in the community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the everyday people who make our health care system work really are ready to embrace change, but it has to be change that works for them. Instead, they see decisions being made behind closed doors by unelected, unaccountable LHINs and hospital CEOs who earn more in a week than most people earn in an entire year in this province, and the promises of better health care sound emptier than ever.

I ask again: Why is this government proceeding with sweeping changes to our hospitals, to our home care and to our entire health care system without listening to the people who are going to be most affected?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The action plan that I revealed in January was very much informed by exactly the advice that the member says we should be getting. Speaker, we not only have the advice, we're acting on the advice.

Today's announcement was about providing higher quality care, more consistency of care across this province and better value for our health care dollars.

We need to make these changes, Speaker, so that we can build up the health care system where we don't have enough resources right now, and that is primary and the home and community care sector of our health care funding. We are moving aggressively on transformation in health care because it's all about providing care for the people of this province today and in the future.

HOME CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. You know, people are very tired of hearing empty promises about better health care because the reality is really falling short in Ontario, especially when it comes to home care.

Lois McRea and her husband live in Sudbury, in that region, and they're a family that requires two home care visits a day. She and her husband have great personal support workers—PSWs—who are very caring and dedicated people. However, on 16 separate occasions since October Lois and her husband have been left waiting alone for care that never came because the provider simply dropped the ball.

Is this a system, really, Speaker, that's working for patients?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we have significantly increased funding to the home care sector. More people are getting more care. That's the way it should be. But is there more we can do, Speaker? Absolutely.

While I've made it very clear that the community sector is where we really need to focus our attention, it's exactly stories like that that drive me to the understanding that not only do we need to spend more money, we need to demand a higher quality of care.

Improving quality is embedded in our Excellent Care for All Act. Our entire health care system is now measuring quality and improving quality. When it comes to home care, we know that we can do better and we will do better.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Elizabeth Element's father is 94, Speaker, and he lives more than an hour outside of Sudbury. Home care has allowed him to stay in his home, where he is comfortable. Her father has been left waiting for hours and hours in adult diapers, not knowing that the appointment has been cancelled.

When Elizabeth calls to reschedule, she reaches a call centre hundreds of kilometres away, and that call centre doesn't understand that his distance from Sudbury means his waits are going to be even longer to get those diapers changed.

Can you explain or can this government explain why their outsourced home care scheduler is leaving Elizabeth's father without the dignity and care that he needs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think all of us in this place hear stories from constituents that demonstrate our need to be ever-vigilant in improving the quality of care. I think that's what unites us all. We want better care for the people in this province.

As our population ages, as our population grows, the demands on our health care system are changing, Speaker. That's why we are taking the steps we are doing to really transform health care.

1100

Today I announced changes to the way hospitals are going to be funded. There are other elements of our action plan that we are moving aggressively on. It's all about providing the best possible care for people in the right place—their home, whenever possible—at the right time, for the best value and for the best price. That is what we are doing, and I hope the member opposite actually embraces the reforms.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the change has been coming down the track for years, and this government has missed it. They should have been preparing for the demographic change in this province for years and years and years; instead they wasted our money on eHealth and on Ornge. That's been their priority. Their friends have gotten a good deal out of it, but the people of Ontario have not.

Everyday families know that home care is a smart investment that will improve the system and will improve people's lives, but after years and years of empty promises, women like Elizabeth and Lois are still struggling with a system that simply does not work. Instead of sticking with a privatized, for-profit model that leaves families falling behind, will the government start listening and get to work on an open, public review that looks at better ways to provide home care and the care that people need in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the member opposite is just wrong when it comes to her allegations. Ontario's health care system is far, far stronger now than it was when we were elected eight years ago. Over two million more Ontarians have access to primary care. We've got 200 family health teams providing care and 26 nurse-practitioner-led clinics. Our wait times are half of what they were when we took office.

We have been working very hard to make the kind of changes that people expect of us and we will continue to do that. We will, in fact, accelerate the change. When it comes to quality of care, Ontarians can be very, very proud of their health care system.

Is there more to do? Of course. Have we come a long, long way? Yes, we have.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, to the Minister of Health: When the Auditor General tables his special report on Ornge this Wednesday, we know that the Minister of

Health will once again insist that neither she nor her ministry knew anything or heard anything about what was going on at Ornge under her watch.

I ask the minister to explain this: On April 14, 2008, Keith Walmsley, a financial analyst at Ornge, sent this letter to the then Minister of Health Promotion, in which he exposed a number of business practices at Ornge that he described as "deceitful." He also exposed the fact that Ornge was keeping two sets of books for the express purpose of hiding a $5-million surplus from the ministry. I would like to know this: What action did the Minister of Health Promotion and the Minister of Health take when they received that letter in April 2008?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think that when it comes to air ambulance service in this province, the people of Ontario have three pretty straightforward questions. The first question is, if somebody they love needs an air ambulance, are they going to get the care they need? The answer is: Absolutely, yes. Ontario is blessed to have one of the finest air ambulance services in the world.

The second question is, "Have you fixed the problem?" The answer to that, Speaker, is yes. I look forward to the Auditor General's report coming in. But I can tell you, Speaker, I didn't wait for that. I sent in a forensic audit team. The entire senior management team, including the board of directors, has been replaced. The issue is now under investigation with the Ontario Provincial Police. I will be introducing new legislation that will make sure this does not happen again, and we are working on a new—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, once again the minister has no idea that a letter even existed. I've just sent the minister copies, not only of the letter sent to the ministry, but of the ministry's response, in which, on December 29, 2008, Ruth Hawkins, the executive lead of the ministry's corporate and direct services division, assured Mr. Walmsley that the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Finance's team of investigative forensic investigators "acted quickly," to use her words, to investigate the allegations and all was looked after. The result? They did nothing.

I ask the minister this: Who should be held accountable for allowing the scamming and the skimming to continue at Ornge for the four years while she was minister: the forensic investigations team, the corporate and direct services division or the minister responsible?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I have a tremendous amount of confidence in the Auditor General. The Auditor General will release his report this week. I think it's important that—as we always do, Speaker—we listen to the Auditor General and that we act on the recommendations of the Auditor General.

I also have tremendous confidence in the Ontario Provincial Police. They are investigating some allegations related to Ornge as well. So there is a lot of oversight at Ornge right now. I think it's very important that we allow that work to be done.

I also think it's very important that members of this Legislature take their responsibility seriously. I understand that the public accounts committee will be looking at issues related to Ornge. We will be introducing legislation shortly that, if it passes first and second reading, will go to committee. So I have every confidence that the people in this House will take their responsibility seriously.

CASINOS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Last week, the Minister of Finance and OLG announced that they wanted to build new casinos, particularly in Toronto and Ottawa.

In a 1999 story by Michael Prentice in the Ottawa Citizen, the Premier said, "No new casinos, no more slot machines, no video lottery terminals. That will be my commitment as Premier."

The question: Why is the Premier suddenly eager to expand gambling into communities that in the past have made it clear they don't want them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, last week, the NDP and their critics said that we shouldn't expand casino gambling; this weekend, their leader was telling us to open slots at racetracks again.

The member opposite forgets it was their party that introduced casino gaming to this province. The member opposite doesn't accurately portray the recommendations. There are no VLTs for Ontario. There will be no casino in the GTA and there will be no casino in Ottawa, unless local officials want them.

The NDP are all over the map on this. They ought to take one solid, consistent position. A week ago, they were against gambling; on the weekend, when they were pandering in other parts of the province, they were in favour of it.

They don't get it. This plan will help improve—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: The minister just said it's local officials; it's not local officials.

My question is back to the Premier. The OLG act of 1999 requires a referendum by a municipality for it to become eligible for a casino. The last time the people of Toronto voted on this issue in a referendum, they rejected it in no uncertain terms.

My question, again: Will the Premier hold a referendum, and if so, will he listen to Torontonians if they say no to new government casinos in this city?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: From a party that allowed casinos without referendum, an interesting point of view, but we will rely, Mr. Speaker, on the will of Toronto. We will make sure that there's a consistent position taken,

unlike the party opposite that says one thing one week, another thing the next week.

I would remind the member opposite that there's a potential for 3,000 jobs at a destination entertainment attraction somewhere in the GTA. So I look forward to the people of Toronto seeing what possibilities are out there. I look forward to their point of view as to whether or not they want the opportunity in the GTA or in Ottawa.

What I can tell you is the old way the OLG was run was not efficient, not effective. This is a better way to run it, more efficiently, with better returns to the people of Ontario.

DRUG SHORTAGE

Mr. Bob Delaney: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. During the past two weeks, there have been reports of a shortage of injectable drugs used by Ontario's health care providers. Ontario has a responsibility to ensure that patients get access to the essential care they need throughout our health care system. Ontarians expect our Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to take action and to address—

Interjections.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland will come to order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: —shortage of critical drugs. Would the minister inform people in neighbourhoods like Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville what Ontario is doing to address the underlying issues arising from the shortage of drugs caused by one specific drug company?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to thank the member for the question. First of all, I think it's important to indicate to this House that there have been no reported cancellations or delays of surgery in Ontario's publicly funded hospitals, Speaker.

On March 6, I did write to the federal Minister of Health, asking to make it mandatory for companies to report shortages. The House of Commons subsequently has passed an NDP motion to do this, on March 14.

On March 7, I publicly detailed our action plan to address issues arising from the shortage. It includes an assessment of the inventory of drugs across Ontario, a redistribution plan to move available supplies of drugs across the province to where they are needed the most, provincial coordination of the procurement of effective drugs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —a plan for service delivery in the event of drug shortages and ongoing communications with the health care sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I understand there's been communication with other provincial and territorial partners regarding this shortage, which affects all of North America. Patient care is Ontario's top priority. This situation gives rise to additional questions regarding the roles and the responsibilities of all those involved, including Ontario's health care providers, such as hospitals, long-term-care homes and hospices; all provinces and territories; the federal government; and drug manufacturers and suppliers. Minister, how are the province, our agencies and our health care partners collaborating to resolve this drug shortage?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, let me begin by saying that Ontario's health care community has really risen to the challenge and are working together in a very, very collaborative way to ensure that patients do get the drugs that they need.

This is an issue that involves many health care partners. Drug manufacturers and suppliers produce the drugs in response to health care system requirements. The manufacturing and supply of drugs must be licensed by Health Canada. The federal government has standards, through federal legislation and regulations, to ensure safe and effective drugs and health products. Hospitals and other care providers purchase drugs and other pharmaceutical products through purchasing organizations. These organizations seek out sources for the drugs from federally licensed providers.

LHINs, Speaker, play an important role in managing emergencies. They work with the local health providers and community members to determine the health priorities of each riding. My ministry works with all of these—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

DRUG SHORTAGE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is also for the Minister of Health. Minister, it's now been over a month. It was February 16 that you were first notified by Sandoz about the impending drug shortage, and as you know, since then the situation in the province of Ontario has worsened. In fact, we have now learned that hospitals and health care providers are scrambling to obtain medication to alleviate the undue pain and suffering of those patients suffering from cancer. Will the minister confirm that the supply of the injectable pain medication hydromorphone is almost depleted and being rationed in our pharmacies and hospitals? What plan does the minister have to obtain it elsewhere?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, this is of course a very important issue and one that affects people who really do need access to those drugs.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from St. Catharines, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell you is that we have an inventory, Speaker, of the drugs where we do have shortages. There have been no surgeries cancelled or delayed to date. That is—we have had none reported to us.

That is not to say, however, that this is not an urgent situation. Our community partners are working together.

We have in place protocols to share the drugs if it gets to that point. At this point, I can tell you that our health care providers are working in a very collaborative way. They are looking after the patients of this province. I am enormously proud of our health care sector, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Again to the Minister of Health: This has nothing to do about surgery. As you know, this has everything to do about people who we want to ensure do not suffer undue pain. And so again I say to you, what are you doing?

Take a look at Ian Anderson House in Oakville, a six-bed hospice for end-of-life cancer patients. They've already been forced to turn away one gentleman, and they have said that they have received no guidance from the ministry as to how to deal with the drug shortage, as have others. So people with cancer are having not to go to a hospice or to remain at home; they're now being forced into overcrowded ERs and hospitals, where hospitals now are saying they don't have drugs.

So I ask you again: Knowing that these drugs are almost depleted and being rationed, what are you doing to obtain them outside of this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure you that the health sector, including the ministry and all the providers, are very, very focused on this issue. When it comes to the issue that was in the media around a hospice, what I can tell you is that we have conference calls three times a week with our providers, including the association of palliative care, Speaker. Once our ministry became aware of this situation, we reached out to the hospice to do what we could to resolve it.

I do encourage health care providers to report any shortages. We have a dedicated emergency line. I'm going to give that number: 1-866-212-2272. Any health care providers will get connected to the right support. Community organizations have begun daily reporting on March 19, today. Hospitals have been reporting since—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Speaker, last Wednesday, without bothering to consult community leaders and residents, the government put 210 workers out of a job in Fort Erie. This short-sighted decision to close the OLG slots in Fort Erie has thrown lives into turmoil and has damaged the economy of a region that is already reeling from severe job losses.

Speaker, will the finance minister explain how this government will spare Fort Erie and Niagara—the Niagara region—from more economic devastation?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Of course there has been job loss as a result of this decision, and there is a very generous severance as well as retraining opportunities provided. One can certainly understand the position and views of families that are affected by this. But at a time like this, we had to choose. Do we want to provide $345 million to the horse racing industry, Mr. Speaker?

I remind the member opposite that last week her leader was asking question after question about the appropriateness of government money for business. Well, this is a big one: $3.8 billion since the program started.

These are difficult choices. We'll continue to work with the families affected. It's the right thing to do, but making this choice, as difficult as it was, was about a better future for all Ontarians, about setting our priorities in the right place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Finance. This isn't a question of horses or health care; it's a question of horses or welfare, because you're going to put 2,000 people on the welfare line with this decision. Even the Liberal member from Niagara Falls has put the blame squarely on the Premier and the finance minister for the decision to close OLG slots at border communities.

The finance minister has wrung his hands over job losses in southwestern Ontario, and he's put another 350 people out of work in his own community and 2,000 in Essex county that rely on the horse harness industry. Instead of tweeting excuses, will he explain to the workers how they're supposed to pay their bills and feed their families, and when will we see a real jobs plan that gets them back to work in southwestern Ontario?

1120

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Two questions ago, the NDP were opposed to gambling; now they're in favour of it, Mr. Speaker. They can't take a consistent position.

I'm with the 2,000 employees at Casino Windsor, with the Windsor Star and others in Windsor who said that, as difficult as it was, this was the right thing to do. Our market can no longer support two institutions competing with themselves, as they both lose more and more money.

So, yes, it is a choice. With $345 million, you can provide two million house calls from doctors. You can provide 27,000 hip and knee replacements. You can provide nine million hours of home care.

These were difficult choices. Leadership requires consistency and making difficult choices—something that's never done and never seen on that side, because they're never done pandering. One position early in question period, quite another at the end of question period. Shame on you for not being straight with your own voters.

EDUCATION

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education. I am proud to be a member of a government that has been acknowledged worldwide for its leadership in education. The OECD just recognized the Ontario government as a strong performer and successful reformer. Furthermore, the Guardian newspaper from the United Kingdom used the McGuinty govern-

ment's education system as a strong example of what they hope to achieve in the near future.

Minister, when this government came to power, the Premier made a pledge to raise graduation rates. Will the minister tell us if the McGuinty government has been successful in achieving these goals?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member from Richmond Hill for his interest and advocacy in public education.

Speaker, I, too, am very proud of the recognition that Ontario's education system is receiving around the world. But do you know what I'm most proud about? I'm most proud about the investments that we are making in our students in Ontario. When we came to office, the graduation rate in 2003 was only 68% of students. Almost one out of every three kids was not graduating. This past year, we are so proud of our Ontario students. In 2011, 82% of Ontario students graduated from high school within five years. That is 93,000 students whose lives are on a better trajectory, and that is because we have made investments in restructuring, rebuilding the confidence in our public education system and helping our students graduate so that they can have a better future for themselves.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Minister. Education is something that has great power to change lives. As a former professor, I know how important good schools are to the future of my young constituents. We all benefit from a strong education system: from parents with young families to the kids who are the next generation of teachers and doctors.

Ontario Liberals know that investing in education in Ontario is the best way to invest in the future of this province. Unfortunately, many of our colleagues here in this House look at what—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Everybody has to be quiet now.

Finish.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Unfortunately, many of our colleagues here in this House look at what teachers, students and parents have accomplished in education, and instead of celebrating the great news that more kids are graduating, they have nothing but criticism.

Speaker, will the minister please tell us how the graduation rate is calculated?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very proud to be part of a government that never leaves any of our students behind. We always focus on increasing our graduation rate and finding ways to help Ontario students build a brighter future for themselves and their families.

Speaker, we measure our graduation rate on a five-year graduation. But no matter how you measure it, let me tell you that more students in Ontario are graduating now than ever before. When we came to office in 2003, on a four-year graduation rate, it was only 56%. Now we've come up by 17 percentage points to 73% of Ontario students who are graduating after four years.

When you take into account all of the students in Ontario who graduate prior to their 25th birthday to build that better life for themselves, 92% of Ontarians are graduating from high school before their 25th birthday. That's something we should all be proud of because it builds a much brighter future for them—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

POLICE

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Labour. A significant portion of policing costs is financed by the province, which is already under tremendous pressure, given your projected $30-billion deficit. Your approach so far has been to try to get blood from a stone. The Ontario Association of Police Services Boards, along with the PC caucus, is calling on your government to help contain these costs by developing specific, well-defined criteria that arbitrators would be required to account for in their decisions. Your hand-picked expert, Don Drummond, called for it in recommendation 15-4 of his report. It further states, "'Ability to pay' criteria should be broadened to include economic and fiscal environment, and productivity criteria in arbitration ... decisions."

Will you commit to enacting that regulation?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Well, it's a great question, and I appreciate the question. I'm sure, as the member mentioned, Mr. Drummond did cover the issue in his report.

In his report, he spoke about the importance of developing principles that would best allow management and labour to work together to deliver excellent services, and with that, we agree.

He also stated that the system should be balanced, effective, transparent, and it should respect the interests of both the employers and the employees. We agree.

He also stated that the collective bargaining agreements that are negotiated between parties are preferred. We agree.

Lastly, Mr. Drummond said that we have an interest arbitration system in Ontario that is not broken. We agree, which is why I believe it's important to get some of the facts on the table regarding interest arbitration.

Interest arbitration is not the first place people go to when a municipality and a union don't agree or they're at an impasse; it's the last place. The facts show that the vast majority of cases where interest arbitration is available—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, you can have your talking points, but we know how long some of those agreements have taken to arrive at under your system.

As you know, the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards is here today. They've come to Queen's Park looking for help to help manage future costs. They're asking your government to finally acknowledge what the PC Party has been saying for some time—that

arbitrators rarely consider ability to pay, despite being instructed to do so. It is obvious that the arbitration system, as it exists, is not balanced.

Will you commit today to accept the advice of the PC Party and your hand-picked economic advisor and implement ability-to-pay criteria in arbitration decisions?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Mr. Speaker, our government has the greatest respect for the collective bargaining process. As a former municipal councillor, I value the work that our firefighters and our police do to keep people across this province safe. We really do.

The hard-working men and women in our labour groups have the right to bargain, and so do their employers. Going behind closed doors to negotiate is simply the best way to get a contractual issue resolved.

We have a good track record of success in this province. Almost 98% of negotiations in Ontario are now concluded without any labour stoppage. It's not a perfect system, but it's one that works. The vast majority of negotiations involving essential service contracts conclude without having to go to arbitration. It's only as a last resort that negotiations go to arbitration.

On this side of the House, we have the utmost respect and appreciation for police officers and firefighters.

ADOPTION

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I know many in this House have read in recent weeks about the hidden tragedy of coerced adoptions in our province. Unmarried mothers were forced to give up their newborn children. I've spoken to some of those mothers, and let me tell you, the stories are heartbreaking. They were separated from their babies at the time of their birth and still live with the trauma of that experience to this day.

Will the minister meet with these mothers to hear their stories and help them uncover what happened to Ontario women in maternity homes?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to thank the member opposite for her question, and I have been following coverage of this story very, very closely. I have to say, as a parent myself, these stories are extremely difficult to read, and I want to commend the women involved for showing the courage to speak out.

1130

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely paramount that all women have their rights protected when making an important decision such as adoption and that they're provided with all the information they need and provided with that information in an unbiased fashion.

My ministry is not aware of a concerted policy to obtain babies for adoption from unmarried mothers. We are committed to supporting an adoption system in Ontario that emphasizes the rights of and the respect for children, birth parents and adoptive parents.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: The Salvation Army and the United Church were among those running maternity homes where these practices have taken place. They have committed to investigating what happened.

Will the minister also commit to following their example by ordering an investigation into past adoption practices in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you again for that question. I want to reiterate that my ministry is not aware of any concerted policy to obtain babies for adoption from unmarried mothers. Our government has worked hard to strengthen transparency and accountability when it comes to adoption practices and adoption laws in Ontario.

Child protection in Ontario currently has a variety of independent and rigorous government-mandated oversights, reviews and systems of accountability, including such measures as the Child and Family Services Review Board, which has the authority to review certain decisions and complaints.

Our government is committed to a transparent and accountable system of adoption. In 2008, we introduced the Access to Adoption Records Act, Mr. Speaker, which was subsequently passed into law, so that adopted adults and birth parents may be able to receive more information contained in records—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. In 2009, the Auditor General made a number of recommendations with regard to the ministry's environmental approval system, including the need to improve its information systems to allow for risk-based assessment, update certificates of approval in a timely and efficient manner and, thirdly, to improve the timeliness of processing new applications.

Speaker, through you, would the Minister of the Environment please provide us with a status update on the ministry's environmental approval process?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Excellent question by the member. The government is transforming Ontario's environmental approvals process to make it more efficient and effective. For the past 30 years, the approvals process has been a paper-based, one-size-fits-all process for business regardless of its size, complexity and potential impact to the environment.

That's changing. As a result of the Open for Business Act, amendments were made to allow for the implementation of a new risk-based environmental assessment approvals process. Moving to a risk-based approach will allow the ministry to focus rigorous reviews on approvals for large-scale projects where there's a greater potential for environmental impact.

We've also developed an electronic library that will improve public access to approvals and all related information. The ministry will continue to focus on ensuring that businesses know what they need to do, will monitor what they are doing and will take the necessary enforcement action, if required.

We've now committed to a six-month streamlined service guarantee to proponents for renewable energy project applications, subject to complete—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to see that the government is working closely with a broad range of stakeholders to build a modern approval system. That's not only a win for businesses and the public but, most importantly, for our environment.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of the Environment: Could you please elaborate on some of the specific initiatives the ministry has recently implemented under the new modernization of approval program?

Hon. James J. Bradley: An excellent supplementary. Since October 31, 2011, the ministry has introduced the following: new compliance tools that will bring facilities with outdated approvals in line with current standards that will enhance environmental protection; a new online registration process for businesses involved in certain routine activities that have less potential to impact the environment; and a new environmental compliance approval that replaces the existing certificate of approval and includes application requirements that will attest to the accuracy and completeness of the application.

It's important to note that there will be no change in environmental standards. Large industries will continue to require detailed ministry reviews and approvals. The ministry has and will continue to be actively engaged in consultations with a number of industry partners, environmental groups, municipalities and aboriginal communities to ensure that the new process is excellent.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, last week your government announced a greedy cash grab that will impact over 60,000 hard-working men and women in Ontario's horse racing industry, killing these good jobs. Only in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario does shutting down an industry that contributes $260 million in direct tax revenue and billions of dollars to overall economic activity seem like a good idea. No wonder you're staring in the face of a $30-billion deficit. Your cynical, short-sighted casino plan is not only risky but poorly planned and lacking in any economic reasoning. Clearly, Minister, adding numbers is not your strong suit.

Minister, why do you continue to play roulette with Ontario's economy? Will any cash grab do?

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: At the beginning of question period, they were telling us to save money. They've talked about corporate welfare, and they want to continue to pay horse tracks $345 million a year. They can't have it both ways. They didn't want to support Chrysler and General Motors when they were in trouble, but they're prepared to continue to support an industry to the tune of $3.8 billion—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Just to highlight how concerned they are, they wait until the last three minutes of question period, thinking the world won't see their inconsistency on this issue, Mr. Speaker.

Leading today involves difficult choices. We'll make those choices. At the beginning of question period, you spoke about the debt and deficit, but you're prepared to fund horse racing for $345 million and you want to cut full-day learning.

Our priorities are very different than yours. We're going to lead and we're going to build a better province than you left us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary to the Minister of Finance: Minister, 262 lost jobs in Sarnia, 365 lost jobs in Fort Erie, and 1,500 in a city you know well—Windsor. We're barely out of the gate and already your job plan is costing hard-working Ontarians over 2,100 jobs. Will you reverse this decision and work with the horse racing industry to ensure the long-term survival of this revenue-creating industry, or will you continue with your one-man wrecking crew, abandoning more hard-working Ontario families in Sarnia? We're at the photo finish on that.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our priorities are very different from their priorities, Mr. Speaker. What the member opposite forgot to mention is that the OLG plan will actually create 2,300—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The two members up front, be quiet, please.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —net new jobs. I am glad that the members are putting on record their views of this—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing: Come to order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —because I'll be interested in hearing what they have to say when we start announcing where the new venues are going to be, where they will make more money, where that money will go to support health care and education.

Unlike the member opposite, we support a strong and vibrant education system, a strong and vibrant health care system, a consistency of view, taking difficult choices to lead this province. We choose education and health care. We choose to build that better province. We just simply don't have—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. The government has just announced cuts to a program that will kill thousands of jobs in rural Ontario.

In the Drummond report, it wasn't just this program that was criticized; it was also the risk management program. That risk management program affects grains and oilseeds, beef, sheep, veal and horticulture crops. But I would like to know today if the minister, and perhaps the finance minister, will commit to keeping that program in the budget.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, these are serious times in Ontario, and we all need to do our share to make sure that we build a strong and vibrant Ontario. When we discuss programs, serious programs, which this government brought in, we do that in concert with our stakeholders. So we're having discussions with the agricultural sector. We'll sit down with our stakeholders, as is our wont to do and to make sure that we get things right, unlike governments on the other side of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands adjourned until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: If a contractual agreement between a government and an industry continues to guarantee an indebted province over $1 billion a year, would you cancel it? I think not. And if the contract allows an industry to thrive and over 60,000 jobs to remain stable in a province struggling to maintain jobs, would you cancel it? I think not.

So would it not be fit to ask why this government is cancelling a revenue-sharing contract with the horse racing industry and the municipalities which does just that? I think it would be fit to ask.

The direct effect on the horse racing industry of cancelling the slots for the racetrack program will also be felt by farmers who supply feed and hay, the veterinarian who cares for the animals and the myriad of suppliers who are essential to this industry. It will be felt by the racetrack employee and the tourism industry. It will be felt by municipalities.

In Quebec, after their government made a similar decision, the horse racing industry was totally decimated.

In Ontario, the horse racing industry is sustaining 60,000 jobs across numerous industries and is guaranteeing over $1 billion a year in government revenue.

It's time for the government to reconsider cancelling this contract. It's time to make the right fiscal decisions to ensure that Ontario prospers with jobs once again.

LIBRARY SERVICES

Mr. Jonah Schein: I rise today to speak against the most recent attack on people in our city and the ongoing impacts of austerity on the people of Ontario.

Picket lines have gone up today and library workers in Toronto have sent a clear message that our public libraries, our communities and our workers in this province will not be sold out.

Residents in my riding of Davenport will not have access to library services at St. Clair/Silverthorn, at Dufferin/St. Clair, at Perth/Dupont or at the Bloor/Gladstone library. They'll be denied access to books, to magazines, to newspapers and computers. They'll be denied opportunities to meet with authors, to participate in book clubs, to go to writing workshops, to get support with career and job searches, or to have a quiet place to study or do homework.

Valuable sites of public education will be closed, but the political establishment in Ontario will send a lesson to Ontarians: In an era of austerity, tax cuts are more important than public services; in an era of austerity, opportunity is reserved only for the rich and the well connected; in an era of austerity, the political elite expect workers to work part-time in libraries, with no benefits, and then go to work at Tim Hortons to try to make ends meet; in an era of austerity, workers, women, children, seniors and low-income and vulnerable residents will pay the highest price and inequality will increase across this province.

Our public libraries are vital to making Toronto a literate, equitable, engaged and vibrant city.

I urge elected officials in this House and across this province to reject the austerity agenda and stand up for the people of Ontario.

I encourage residents of this city to speak out and protect our public services and to stand in solidarity with our library workers.

Torontonians, please call your city councillors today and tell them to stand up for your community. Tell them to offer Toronto public library workers a fair deal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

PETER MILLER

Mr. David Zimmer: Today, I'm pleased to speak to honour an extraordinary Ontarian and one of my constituents in Willowdale. This week, Community Living Newmarket-Aurora will pay tribute to Peter Miller with their 2012 Community Service Award. The award exemplifies the essence and spirit of a lifetime dedicated to making this world a better place for future generations.

Peter is a towering community builder who helps make good ideas become a reality. His support in the areas of health care, social services and sports seems to

know no bounds. He's done so much for so many and seeks no attention for it.

The list of organizations that receive his support is too extensive to list in full, but includes the Canadian Red Cross, Canadian Friends of Haifa University, Community Living Newmarket/Aurora, Ronald McDonald House Charities, the Salvation Army and the children's aid society.

Of special interest to Peter is youth support. He's been a long-time supporter of the Newmarket hockey house league tournament. It's one of the oldest continuous house league hockey tournaments in Ontario.

In his community, Peter will be forever connected with extraordinary generosity of spirit. It's fitting that he's been selected to receive this award.

Peter, I send you my personal congratulations and the congratulations of this chamber. Thank you, Peter.

CURLING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very proud to stand before you today and congratulate Team Howard, the Canadian Tim Hortons Brier men's curling champions. Team Howard is made up of skip Glenn Howard, who has curled more games in the Brier than any other skip in history; vice Wayne Middaugh; second Brent Laing; lead Craig Savill; and, of course, the young spare, Scott Howard, son of Glen and boyfriend of Karley Pipiter of Coldwater.

For the seventh straight year Team Howard, curling out of the Coldwater Curling Club—and also very friendly with the Midland and Penetanguishene curling clubs in the township of Severn—have been the Ontario curling champions.

These guys are all great community leaders, continually helping young and new curlers with many, many events. Even this Thursday, between the Brier and the world championships, there's a program called Curl with the Pros at the Penetanguishene Curling Club—it's a fundraiser for the Georgian Bay General Hospital—and they're taking part in that as well.

From March 31 to April 8, Team Howard will represent Canada at the world championships in Basel, Switzerland. In the past, Glenn Howard has been to the world championships three times, and each time he has won the world championship for Canada. So we're all cheering Glenn on as he represents Canada again in the world championships, and we want to say how proud we are of this great Team Howard.

VIOLENT INCIDENT IN LONDON

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to use my statement here today to speak about the incident that occurred in my riding of London–Fanshawe this past weekend.

On Saturday, March 17, when many share in the celebration of St. Patrick's Day, London experienced an unacceptable outburst of violence, vandalism and disrespect for our community.

At approximately 10 p.m., the London fire service was called upon to attend to a small brush fire on Fleming Drive, which is a residential neighbourhood of Fanshawe College.

It was reported that a group of approximately 1,000 people confronted and assaulted the London fire service with bricks and bottles upon their arrival. The London police were called in to protect the firefighters and escort them away from the violence.

The scene further escalated into vehicles being set ablaze, and damage to our community is calculated to be in the range of $100,000. While many referenced Fanshawe's students as the agitators, it's important to recognize that others were attracted to and participated in these events.

I stand with the students and community members who have expressed their dismay and outrage at these actions. I am deeply grateful that the situation did not escalate further and that no one was critically hurt.

I do want to personally thank the London fire service, Middlesex London EMS and the London police for their dedication and concern for our community. You have my sincerest thanks for your service and for the risks faced on our behalf. These events are deeply disappointing, and this is not what the Fanshawe community is about.

I know our community will work together to get to the root of these problems.

HERB CARNEGIE

Mr. Michael Coteau: On March 9, 2012, Herb Carnegie, a legend in the sport of hockey and an icon in Canadian history, passed away at the age of 92.

Born in Toronto to Jamaican immigrants in 1919, Mr. Carnegie grew up loving Canada's game of hockey. He and his brother Ossie rose through the ranks of their local north Toronto league, and Mr. Carnegie eventually landed a position in the minor leagues. He was named most valuable player in the Quebec provincial league three times and eventually got to the New York Rangers' NHL training camp.

Mr. Carnegie's talent was noted by hockey luminaries of his era, but it has been said that the elites of the game did not want to see a black player in the NHL. Insultingly, he was offered a minor league contract at less money than he was making in the Quebec league. Mr. Carnegie would never play in the NHL, something he deserved, and this was due at least in part to the prejudice that existed during his era.

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In retirement, Mr. Carnegie dedicated his life to others. He poured himself into charity work, and he and his family established the Herbert H. Carnegie Future Aces Foundation, a charity dedicated to providing scholarships, building communities and fostering self-esteem in youth. He excelled in business and was a recipient of the Order of Ontario and the Order of Canada.

Mr. Carnegie leaves behind a towering legacy that was formed with courage, grace, dignity and tenacity. Herb

Carnegie challenged the dominant assumptions of race inside professional sports during an intolerant time, and he fought to belong in a sport that had never seen a black professional player. He was our Jackie Robinson, and today and forever we fondly remember him.

PETER HEFFERING

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to rise today to pay tribute to a Canadian agricultural legend. Peter Heffering, a giant in cattle and horse breeding, passed away earlier this month at the age of 80. He was known as "the great artist" of Holstein cattle because of his pioneer work in genetics with the Hanover Hill herd.

His other passion was standardbred horses. Peter owned many champions and founded Tara Hills in Port Perry, a farm operation operated today by his son David and his family—I would say it that way. I recently visited the farm, and it's one of our premier horse-breeding operations in North America.

He was inducted into both the Canadian Agricultural Hall of Fame and the Canadian Horse Hall of Fame. Peter Heffering was a shining example of success in Ontario's agricultural communities. It's a privilege and an honour to say that I've known him.

Mr. Speaker, Ontarians are shocked to learn the McGuinty government is dismantling the successful partnership with racetracks and breeding that enables Ontario farms like Tara Hills to thrive. The McGuinty government is already closing the slot facilities in Fort Erie, Windsor and Sarnia at a cost of 560 family jobs.

I urge this House to look at the $2 billion in value it receives from this contractual arrangement and 60,000 jobs related to this part of the economy in the horse industry. I ask people to look closely at how important it is to this community.

ONTARIO CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I rise today to recognize the Ontario Cattlemen's Association and their members who are visiting Queen's Park today as part of the Rural Ontario Institute's advanced agricultural leadership program.

The Ontario Cattlemen's Association is a grassroots organization that provides leadership to cattlemen from all sectors of the industry. I think all members of this House can be proud of the work that the OCA does so that Ontarians can enjoy delicious locally produced beef.

The OCA recently elected a new president, Dan Darling of Northumberland county. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Dan—I look forward to working with him this year—and also to thank outgoing president Curtis Royal of Simcoe county for his many years of work with our government. We've enjoyed working with you, Curtis.

To everyone involved in the OCA and to the 19,000 beef producers who are members of this organization, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate OCA on your 50th anniversary and 50 years of wonderful service to the cattlemen of Ontario.

CERTIFIED GENERAL ACCOUNTANTS OF ONTARIO

Mr. Rod Jackson: Today, I'd like to recognize and express my gratitude to the certified general accountants who volunteer their time and expertise providing free tax preparation for thousands of lower-income Ontarians every year.

The association of certified general accountants is a self-regulating body that represents 20,000 CGAs plus 8,000 aspirants to the designation. They are committed to contributing to the development of public policy that supports economic health and growth in Ontario. Their free tax preparation clinics will provide relief to more families than ever this year.

Barrie has one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. There are many people in need. This month, we had the opportunity to welcome the CGA volunteers at our constituency office to co-host several free tax clinics for the public. I'm proud to announce that this event was immensely successful and well received by the community. The amount of people served by the dedicated expert CGAs doubled compared to that of the previous year, with our combined efforts. To quote a constituent at the tax clinic, "The greeters were so pleasant and cheerful, and the tax experts were second to none."

I just want to thank all the CGAs, my staff and volunteers who came together to share their expertise and help relieve some of the mounting economic burdens carried by Ontario families today.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AMENDMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ DE PROTECTION DES ANIMAUX DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. MacLaren moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 47, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act / Projet de loi 47, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, this amendment to the OSPCA Act will separate farm animals from non-farm animals. Farm animals will fall under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food; non-farm animals will stay under the jurisdiction of the OSPCA and the charity that it currently is and with the sheltering service it currently offers.

Under OMAFRA, staff people will work for OMAFRA, under the umbrella of the OSPCA legislation. They will respond to complaint calls, go to farms, enter on to farm properties with the farmer's permission or a warrant, call a veterinarian if there is any thought of abuse—a veterinarian's professional opinion. The farmer will have the chance to approve of the vet or call his own vet. That report will determine whether there is abuse or not. The veterinarian will recommend treatment and removal of animals if necessary. The inspector would go to a justice of the peace to get an order to remove animals. The inspector would have the ability to call a policeman if he felt it was necessary to have a policeman decide if there was a need to lay charges.

Non-farm animals would be under the jurisdiction, again, of the OSPCA as it is currently structured. The inspectors there would have the same powers—limited. They would have the authority to respond to calls, call a veterinarian, a justice of the peace if seizure is needed, and call a policeman if there's a need to lay charges.

As well, there would be a change to how the chief inspector is selected. Currently, the OSPCA board of directors chooses and appoints a person to be the chief inspector. This would be changed to be the Lieutenant Governor in Council, who would have the authority to review any appointment or remove an appointed person as chief inspector of the OSPCA. This would put in place government oversight.

ALZHEIMER ADVISORY COUNCIL ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 CRÉANT LE CONSEIL CONSULTATIF DE LA MALADIE D'ALZHEIMER

Mrs. Cansfield moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 48, An Act to establish the Alzheimer Advisory Council and develop a strategy for the research, treatment and prevention of Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia / Projet de loi 48, Loi créant le Conseil consultatif de la maladie d'Alzheimer et élaborant une stratégie de traitement et de prévention de la maladie d'Alzheimer et d'autres formes de démence et de recherche en la matière.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: First of all, I would like to thank and share how grateful I am to my co-sponsors of this bill, the member from Parkdale–High Park and the member from Whitby–Oshawa.

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This act seeks to establish an Alzheimer Advisory Council. The council would consider all matters related to persons with Alzheimer's disease and their informal caregivers and make recommendations to the minister. The minister would be responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy respecting research, treatment and prevention of Alzheimer's disease and other related forms of dementia. Furthermore, the minister would be required to take into consideration the reports of the Alzheimer Advisory Council to contribute to the development of the strategy.

This bill states the government of Ontario's undertaking with respect to the critically important issues related to Alzheimer's disease and other related dementias.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

POLICE SERVICES

SERVICES POLICIERS

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I rise in the House on this occasion to remind all members that today is Queen's Park day for the Ontario Association of Police Service Boards.

Several representatives of the Ontario Association of Police Service Boards are in the visitors' gallery this afternoon. I invite all members to welcome them and thank them for their contributions towards keeping Ontario safe.

Les commissions de services policiers civiles font tout leur possible pour mettre en place des services policiers de haute qualité dans leurs collectivités. L'Ontario Association of Police Service Boards est ainsi un chef de file de la promotion de la sécurité communautaire à l'échelle de la province.

This government works closely with the Ontario Association of Police Service Boards for the benefit of all Ontarians. Recently, we invited the association and our other major policing partners to participate in a summit on the future of policing. This was a very productive meeting which will help to lay the foundation for future work. Together with our policing partners, this government is committed to pursuing effective methods of law enforcement, crime reduction and crime prevention even during tough economic times.

Après tout, des collectivités sécuritaires sont essentielles à la qualité de vie des résidants et résidantes de l'Ontario. Notre gouvernement tire parti des liens

solides qu'il a établis avec le secteur des services policiers depuis de nombreuses années.

We've collaborated with our partners to launch several successful law enforcement initiatives since coming to office. Those initiatives have helped to remove drunk drivers, gangs, guns and illegal drugs from our streets. They have placed officers in schools to work with youth at risk, helping to prevent crime and the victimization of vulnerable children. And they have helped police crack down on the despicable crimes of child Internet exploitation, human trafficking and hate.

Mr. Speaker, law enforcement is a challenging field that is constantly evolving. I am confident that this Queen's Park day will provide an important opportunity to continue an important dialogue with the policing community. Our government shares the same goal as every member of every police service board in the province: to keep Ontarians safe in a manner that is effective and sustainable for generations to come.

I encourage all members to participate and offer a special thanks to the women and men of Ontario's police services boards. I look forward to seeing all members of this House at the reception hosted by the association this evening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to respond to the minister's statement today on the Ontario Association of Police Service Boards day here at Queen's Park. I too welcome them and thank them for joining us here today to articulate some of the issues that they feel are important in allowing them to help do their work as members of the police services boards in their communities.

I know a number of these folks personally in my riding, and I can tell you that they do a tremendous job not only in acting as a liaison between the police themselves and the community, through their work on the board, but they also do a tremendous job in trying to ensure that the community can continue to make those services sustainable.

One of the things I must say, Speaker, is that today I asked the Minister of Labour a question with respect to the arbitration system here in the province of Ontario and how it has failed police service boards across this province. The minister's answer, instead of saying that she would adopt recommendation 15-4 of the Drummond report—which, of course, was their hand-picked economist to review some of the things that might be done better here in the province of Ontario, and he specifically looked at the arbitration system and recommended that the ability to pay be established as a key criteria in that system—the minister's answer to the question was simply to say, "Very few contract negotiations ever get to arbitration."

That is, in fact, correct; very few do get to arbitration. But there's a very good reason for that, and the minister is quite aware: because the history of what happens once it gets to arbitration has made police service boards across the province reluctant to ever allow it to get to that stage because they're concerned that the decisions made, should it get there, are going to be more expensive than the negotiated settlement.

I say to the minister, you're the government. They're asking for something; they're asking us to bring this issue to the Legislature, which we have; they're asking the government to do what is stated clearly in the Drummond report with respect to the arbitration system.

You can't say that a system is not broken when nobody is using it. That's a poignant example of what is wrong with it: Nobody is using it because they're afraid of what will happen if they do use it. So I say to the minister: Take heed of the messages that are being delivered by the police services boards here today.

Let's get one thing very, very clear: We are extremely proud of the men and women in this province who put on a uniform and serve in a police department across this province, be it provincial or municipal. We're very proud of the work they do. They are among the best, if not the best, in all of the world, and they should be commended and compensated well for their work.

At the same time, the police services boards are asking this Legislature to help them in their very important work in ensuring that those police services will always be available and will be continuously sustainable under the framework of any taxpayers' situation, and that is the fact that we don't have an open chequebook. The ability to pay must be something that is taken into consideration. I know that police unions across this province will agree to that; they'll share that view.

There may be other ways to cut costs in this province with regard to the actual cost of the services. There are many ways that can be looked at, but I don't think the component of a better arbitration system that speaks to the ability of the municipality to pay is foreign at all. It is one that would be extremely helpful to our municipalities, and I know that those folks from the Ontario Association of Police Service Boards today would like to see that change take place.

Having said that, Speaker, I do encourage all members of this House to meet with members of the services boards today, if they can. Certainly, join us at the reception this evening. They will be having a reception for all MPPs and their staff later this afternoon. Thank you very much.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure to offer my greetings and welcome to members of the Ontario Association of Police Service Boards who are here at Queen's Park today on their lobby day, so to speak.

It was my pleasure, as well, to meet with members of the board and their representatives, along with the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, who is our critic for the Ministry of the Attorney General.

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The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke raised one of the issues that I heard today regarding the arbitration process. However, there were several other issues that were raised that I think the minister is certainly aware of and that I'm hopeful she will take a look at.

One of them is quite simple, in the sense that there are 630 board members that make up the Association of Police Service Boards across Ontario. Each and every year, new members come in, and some leave, yet there is no stable funding mechanism to ensure that they are trained adequately so that they provide the services to their community that they want to, that they're offering. Members of police services boards in municipalities, Mr. Speaker, are not necessarily involved in policing or law; they may simply be concerned citizens who want to do their part and want to add to their commitment to their communities. However, we don't give them any training whatsoever through the province.

It was the case in 1996 that the government did provide some funding to provide training to members of these boards. However, in 1997 that was cut. Subsequently, the ministry did take up a portion of the training. However, that was cut wholeheartedly in recent years.

Now the services boards are requesting a real small commitment on the side of the ministry where, on an annual basis, they would commit $120,000, roughly 30%, to police services boards for governance and education and training programs. I think that's really a small commitment. It's something that certainly will go a long way in ensuring that these boards can provide their mandate, can do it well and can make the decisions that municipalities are hoping that they make and that they're wanting to make for the betterment of policing in this province.

Other issues that were raised today are, really, the entire nature of what we use policing for in this province. More and more, we see us relying on our policing services, whether it be through the OPP or municipal services, for incidents that weren't typically under their mandate. We see them responding to higher incidences of mental health issues; typically that void was filled by community support workers and social services. There's an indication there that there has been, over the years, quite a massive amount of downloading from the provinces that has added to the budgets of municipal forces and to the OPP, and that has increased costs and really made it unsustainable.

I think the Association of Police Service Boards is warranted in asking the ministry to take a look at where they've fallen back, where they've missed the boat in terms of the support for those social services that could play a real, important part in reducing the need for such enormous budgets on the side of our policing in this province.

Of course, they're looking at other issues in terms of post-traumatic stress disorders that our first responders sometimes have an inclination towards when having dealt with disastrous scenarios. I think it's an important component to ensure that we provide that safeguard for our first responders. If they're going into a disaster zone or an emergency scenario, we should ensure that the province has the mechanisms to provide that training or the care that they require should they suffer adverse effects from that. It's the least we can do, certainly from this province's standpoint.

I look forward to further discussions with the services board, and I thank them once again for coming here today and meeting with us.

PETITIONS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present the first petition of this particular session from my riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas industrial wind turbine developments have raised concerns among citizens over health, safety and property values; and

"Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approvals"—and I'm glad to see the Minister of Energy is here;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments and that a moratorium on wind development be declared until an independent, epidemiological study is completed into the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines."

I'm pleased to sign the petition because I agree with it, and present it to Kyle, one of the new pages here.

CELLULAR TRANSMISSION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition signed by some residents in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the operation of cellular commercial transmission equipment on new or existing cell towers has been proposed near residential areas in Oakville and other communities around the province; and

"Whereas Industry Canada has ultimate authority to approve the location of cellular communications transmission equipment under the federal Radiocommunication Act; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario has no jurisdiction in the placement of cell communications, equipment or services; and

"Whereas many area residents and local elected officials have expressed concerns with the location due to its proximity to residential areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada review the siting of cellular commercial communications transmission equipment in residential areas; and

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada place a moratorium on the installation

of cellular commercial communication transmission equipment on new or existing towers within 1,000 metres of residential homes until an improved separation distance is established by the federal government."

Thank you, Speaker. I'll sign this petition.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government has announced that the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. will end its Hiawatha racetrack slots operations in Sarnia on March 31 ... even though the current agreement does not expire until 2018; and

"Whereas the end of this program will cost the city of Sarnia 140 jobs immediately and $1.5 million a year in gaming revenues, not to mention potentially 60,000 jobs across the province" that the program has scrapped entirely; and

"Whereas there has been absolutely no consultation with the community, employees, or owner/operator of the local facility; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to put more and more Ontarians out of work due to its ill-conceived, ad hoc decisions, including, in Sarnia, the loss of 80 jobs at the local jail, 100 jobs at Lambton generating station, and numerous others due to high energy costs on businesses;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the McGuinty government stop risking thousands of jobs in Ontario and $1.5 billion in potential revenue by mismanaging the racetrack slots program and focus on finding solutions to the real problems that" Ontarians are facing.

I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker, and will affix my signature to the same.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the horse racing industry employs approximately 60,000 people, creates $1.5 billion in wages and $2 billion in recurring expenditures annually; and

"Whereas the partnership that was created between government and the horse breeding and racing industry has been a model arrangement and is heralded throughout North America, with 75% of revenues going to the provincial government to fund important programs like health care and education, 5% to the municipalities and only 20% goes back to the horse business; and

"Whereas the horse business is a significant source of revenue for the farming community and rural municipalities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Finance continue the revenue-sharing partnership with the horse racing industry for the benefit of Ontario's agricultural and rural economies."

I agree with this petition, will affix my seal and give it to page Aylin to deliver to the Clerk.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a new policy from the Electrical Safety Authority [that] mandates that all electrical contractors must have at least one licensed master electrician on staff for every business effective" this past "December 31, 2011, is forcing electrical contracting small businesses in Ontario out of business;

"Whereas this ESA policy severely impacts small electrical contracting businesses in Ontario. George, in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, who has been in the electrical trade for the past 51 years and a small business owner for the past 36 years, who" is in "good standing with the Electrical Safety Authority, Ontario Hydro, local utilities, who follows the same rules and regulations of the ESA, follows the Ontario electrical codes, adheres to the same inspections and pays the same fees as large companies, will not be allowed to renew his electrical contractor licence. Effective December 31, 2011, George will no longer be licensed to practise in Ontario. George will be forced to close his small business.

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Consumer Services to direct the Electrical Safety Authority of Ontario to modify the licensing requirements to allow small electrical contractors and self-employed electricians to work in the residential and rural market without the unnecessary burden of obtaining a master electrician licence, or at the very minimum, grandfather those who are currently qualified and entitled to work in Ontario."

I agree with the petition and will be signing it. Thank you, and I'm handing it off to page Teresa.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mr. Robert Bailey: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

"Whereas the Dog Owners' Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll send this down with Sharmeila.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: Speaker, a petition in support of Bill 9, paved shoulders on provincial highways. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary provincial highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka's private member's bill provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That private member's Bill 9, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated provincially owned highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

Mr. Speaker, I support this.

CELLULAR TRANSMISSION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: A petition, again, from some citizens in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the operation of cellular commercial transmission equipment on new or existing cell towers has been proposed near residential areas in Oakville and other communities around the province;

"Whereas Industry Canada has ultimate authority to approve the location of cellular communications transmission equipment under the federal Radiocommunication Act;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has no jurisdiction in the placement of cell communications equipment or services; and

"Whereas many area residents and local elected officials have expressed concerns with the location due to its proximity to residential areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada review the siting of cellular commercial communications transmission equipment in residential areas; and

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada place a moratorium on the installation of cellular commercial communication transmission equipment on new or existing towers within 1,000 metres of residential homes until an improved separation distance is established by the federal government."

I agree with this, Speaker, and will sign it and send it down with Seph.

HYDRO DAM

Mr. Norm Miller: I have hundreds of petitions here to do with Bala Falls, and it reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government permitted the release of crown lands to enable the development of a hydro dam in the heart of Bala without discussion or proper consultation with the municipality of the township of Muskoka Lakes, the district of Muskoka or the residents and businesses who would be directly affected; and

"Whereas the community is a tourism destination which is dependent on Bala Falls as an attraction; and

"Whereas residents and business people alike are deeply concerned about the economic and environmental impact that the construction and operation of the dam will have on the community;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government and in particular the Minister of Natural Resources reverse the decision to release crown lands for a hydro dam in Bala Falls."

Mr. Speaker, I affix my signature to this petition.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

Mr. Robert Bailey: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by hundreds of people from Sarnia–Lambton.

"Whereas the proposed closure of the Sarnia Jail will impact 76 employees and result in a loss of over $6 million to the local Sarnia–Lambton community; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government states that the Sarnia Jail is underutilized while in fact it is currently at 105% capacity; and

"Whereas there are no costs currently associated with transporting inmates from the Sarnia Jail to the Sarnia courthouse, and transporting inmates from Windsor to Sarnia will greatly increase costs, costs which may become a burden to the city of Sarnia and thus local taxpayers; and

"Whereas the mayor, local OPP, the Sarnia police chief, the RCMP, aboriginal police, First Nations … and the Canadian border services were not consulted prior to the Sarnia Jail … announcement, and if closed, Sarnia would become the busiest border crossing in Ontario without a" facility;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the McGuinty Liberal government immediately conduct a public review of the Sarnia Jail and make that cost-benefit analysis available to the public prior to its closure."

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it down with Kyle.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's" and others "is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the ... public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health ... to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme" diagnosis "and to have everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I agree with the petition and will sign this and deliver it with page Emily.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas there have been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

I agree with this petition—it will come back to the House again, I trust—and I affix my name and send it with Alexander to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY GENERATING FACILITIES AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX, DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 7, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2012 / Projet de loi 34, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2012 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated Bill 34 at second reading, the New Democrats had the floor. I now turn to the government. Further debate? I recognize the member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

1350

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 34, the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2012. During the few minutes allotted to me today, I'd like to speak to the bill but also to some issues relating to courts and their cost of operation in my riding and across Ontario.

How ironic that just this past weekend, we saw another instance of this sort of hooliganism and wanton disregard for public and private property during the St. Patrick's Day riot in London, Ontario. Canadians have for most of my life believed that those sorts of antics were restricted to parts of the world where there are not the same deeply entrenched democratic values and respect for property rights of others. That's what we thought. But the Premier managed to dispel that belief by hopelessly mismanaging what should have been another routine public safety issue when the G20 meetings were held in Toronto in June 2010.

You'll recall that just prior to the commencement of those meetings, the Premier announced that he and his cabinet, in secret and without any prior public debate, invoked regulation 233/10 under the Public Works Protection Act, which in effect turned a massive swath of downtown Toronto into a public work. By doing so, he claimed that this would give the police special arrest powers and would ensure that the G20 meeting site was protected, inside and outside the fence erected around the site, against any untoward activity.

Instead of protecting the site, the announcement of these unprecedented police powers simply inflamed the public and gave one more excuse to those who were looking for reasons to protest what they claimed was the oppression of any number of civil rights by one or more of the G20 countries. In other words, Mr. Speaker, the Premier played right into the hands of the protesters and gave them exactly the sort of undemocratic power trips that were the raison d'être for the protests in the first place.

While I'm pleased that the Premier has seen fit to eliminate the ability of his government to replicate the public disgrace of the G20 regulation, it does not excuse his poor judgment in 2010. If the Premier is looking for notoriety, I think his fiscal mismanagement will be enough to ensure his place in the history books of Ontario. He didn't have to emulate the other great example of left-wing liberalism, Pierre Trudeau, and his enactment of the War Measures Act.

Nowhere in this bill, or in the comments made by the Liberal members who have spoken to it, has there been an apology for the abuse of power and the abuse of the public trust.

It is simply unacceptable for a minister of the government to leave the impression before the G20 meetings that the regulation gave the police the ability to enforce a five-metre exclusion zone outside the fence when it gave no such authority. It was unseemly for the government to then point the finger to the Toronto police and try to pass the buck when they knew full well that the information provided to the police had been misleading.

This was a major scandal, Mr. Speaker, and the use of this World-War-II-vintage law to round up people during the G20 summit wound up contributing to a major embarrassment for this province and massive property losses to businesses and individuals in the downtown core.

Even the chronology of the passage of the regulation contributes to the abusive nature of the government actions. The regulation was passed by the cabinet on June 2, 2010, and it gave the police extraordinary powers of arrest until June 28, 2010, the day after the G20 summit ended. While the new regulation did appear on the online provincial database known as e-Laws one week before the summit, it wasn't officially published in the Ontario Gazette until July 3, one week after the regulation expired.

So the bottom line was a misleading press release to the media suggesting that the police could demand identification from anyone moving within five metres of the fence that formed the perimeter around the G20 meeting site. If they refused to provide identification, they faced arrest and, if convicted under this regulation, could face up to two months in jail or a $500 maximum fine.

Opposition to this inappropriate action by the government was swift and widespread. No less than the provincial auditor recommended that the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should take steps to revise or replace the Public Works Protection Act: "If the government wants to claim the authority to designate security areas to protect persons, an integrated statute should be created that could be used not only to protect public works but also provide proper authority for ensuring the security of persons" during events when required.

The auditor then went on to question whether it was appropriate to have the guards offer conclusive testimony about the location of security boundaries. He condemned the lack of openness, transparency and accountability with the means through which the regulation was passed, and he suggested that the public was not properly advised of the true nature of the regulation.

The government asked former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry to review the entire act, which he did, and he reported back with his recommendations in April 2011. Here we are, almost one year later, and we are only now just proceeding through second reading of the bill that will respond to the criticisms of the provincial auditor, the recommendations of Justice McMurtry and the outrage of the people of Ontario.

I think it is a sad commentary on the current government that no previous government had ever abused the powers of the Public Works Protection Act in the 70 years it had been in effect, Mr. Speaker. No previous government felt the urge to trample on public rights. None of the 14 cabinet ministers had the courage to stand up and decry the misleading and abusive nature of the regulation they were asked to endorse.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting in favour of this bill, primarily because it is essential that this government be denied the opportunity to repeat the sordid and unseemly actions of June 2010. Protecting our courts, our nuclear plants and our power generation facilities are all legitimate goals and, I suspect, were the inspiration for the passage of the original Public Works Protection Act back during World War II.

To suggest, though, that the very realistic fears of fifth columnists and sabotage during the world war could possibly be compared with any risk that was facing downtown Toronto is simply ridiculous. We cannot afford to have public liberties limited, even in the face of anti-social threats by the likes of those individuals who participated in the G20 protests. Passing Bill 34 will ensure that more appropriate controls are in place to guarantee that no future government will yield to the temptation to follow the inappropriate example set by this government in June 2010.

1400

Before I close, Mr. Speaker, I just want to touch on the courts and court costs in the province of Ontario. If this

government has any concern for municipalities, particularly small and rural municipalities, it will end the downloading of court costs, a process he spent hours decrying when he was in opposition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank my good friend the honourable member for Northumberland–Quinte West who raises several wonderful points that I think have been well articulated throughout the several weeks that we've debated this bill.

Number one that he raises is that there has yet to be a fulsome apology from the government side on the actions that were taken during the G20 and the secretive nature that brought about the imposition of this bill on those peaceful protesters who took to the streets during the G20 summit. That certainly should be a component that the government realizes and hears. Just as a tip, if this bill gets passed, you may want to preface the remarks with a fulsome apology because I think it will go a long way to having Ontarians accept the sincerity of this bill.

Secondly, I see that the government seats are quite vacated, but I would caution the minister, as well as members, that threats to our nuclear system and to our energy capabilities and infrastructure aren't as they were in the past. I wonder if the ministry is contemplating virtual threats, and by that I mean viruses that are launched by outside forces, similar to the Stuxnet virus that was launched on other nuclear facilities. We have to take a serious look at this. I don't know if this bill goes that far in terms of scope, but there are outside influences and threats that are even more tangible than any one person or group could ever offer to infrastructure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It's my pleasure to rise today to speak on the comments that were moved forward by the member from Northumberland–Quinte West on this bill. First of all, I want to thank him for his support. He's going to support this bill.

It's about time this bill was reviewed. Under the great recommendations from Justice McMurtry, we have drafted a bill to replace the one that is outdated, and we thank Justice McMurtry for his good recommendations.

It's important that our courthouses and our electric facilities be safe—and also the people who work in our court facilities: our judges, our crowns and all the officials. Because of unfortunate happenings in the past, Judge McMurtry saw fit that we not only do away with the past bill, but that we replace the bill to ensure that our courts are very secure and our electricity facilities are also very secure.

I encourage all members in the House to support this new bill, and if they have any suggestions to improve it, we're open to them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: It was a very good presentation by the member for Northumberland–Quinte West. We shouldn't be surprised: a former high school teacher and a farmer—there are a few of us in this House who have had those careers—who brings forward the kind of common sense and communication skills that you would expect having a background like that.

Rob took over a riding that, at one time, for many, many years, was represented by Doug Galt, who had quite a presence in this Legislature. There seemed to be an ongoing duel year after year between that member, Doug Galt, and a member from a neighbouring riding, who's actually still here and continues the oratorical tradition. It was a tough fight during the election to get this member here, and by what we see in this Legislature, it's going to be a little easier next time.

With respect to this legislation, it's almost too focused, in a sense, and I know members opposite have—and I see in Hansard it says, "Well, we have the Criminal Code, we have the Trespass to Property Act, we have other more modern legislation that is far superior to what we had 70, 71 or 72 years ago, when this legislation was brought in." I think that's somewhat naive. We continue to live in dangerous times. I know someone in the House said that we no longer need to fear saboteurs operating in the dark of night. I think that's naive, given the present situation in our world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Northumberland–Quinte West. I have not had an opportunity—because he's so recently arrived—to hear him speak many times in this House, and I want to commend him for what he had to say. He had a very good analysis of why we are here debating this particular bill.

It isn't so much that people on the opposition side are opposed to this bill, because we all recognize that this bill is preferable to the one that it's replacing. But the question still has to be asked, and he asked it very well: How is it that after 70 years of existence, this was the first time that any government saw fit to use it? How is it that it was not used in this, I would put, form of barbarity during the entire Second World War? It was not used during the Korean War. It was not used at any juncture, even in the War Measures Act. No government of Ontario saw fit to use this bill until the Liberals, a few years ago, looked at it, in light of the G20, and thought that this was the answer, this was the solution, this is what needed to happen.

He is absolutely right that it was inappropriate, and he's absolutely right that it needs to be replaced, because I don't think we should ever allow any government of any stripe to use that kind of bill against the civil liberties of the people of this province ever again.

He was absolutely right that this was used, and what is happening now is a cover for the inappropriate actions that this government used against the people of Ontario last year.

He is absolutely right that not one of the 14 cabinet ministers or those who hung around the table on that day

had the courage to stand up and to protect the civil liberties of the people of this province.

So I commend him for what he had to say here today. We need to get on with passing this bill, but we ought never to forget why this bill is here in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We've had four questions and comments. I now return to the member for Northumberland–Quinte West, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Listening to my NDP colleagues and their kind remarks regarding Bill 34—the member from Essex as well as Beaches–East York, and the minister for her acknowledgement that we do have to move forward on this type of bill to ensure that the civil liberties that we do so enjoy as Canadians and Ontarians don't get trampled on or overrun by any government, regardless of stripe, like the member from Beaches–East York mentioned.

I'd also like to thank my member from Haldimand–Norfolk, Mr. Barrett, for his acknowledgments as well.

1410

Obviously, all parties have moved forward, and this is why we're debating this bill today: to ensure that those civil liberties are going to be protected.

There's more that we can do as well, Mr. Speaker. Not any piece of legislation is perfect. The member from Haldimand–Norfolk talked earlier about protecting other facilities as well up in northern Ontario: Nanticoke and oil refineries. This is an area, as well, I think we definitely need to look into to ensure that those facilities are also brought under the umbrella. I'm sure that will be something that we look at in the future. I think that's definitely a positive step that we're taking by debating this Bill 34 here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: First, I'd like to start off, Speaker, today by saying that there were certainly, as I watched the circumstances unfold that weekend from a great distance—we watched the television; we watched the computer; we watched YouTube. We watched all the things that were transpiring that weekend.

The thing that stands out in my mind the most, Speaker, was the ineffectiveness of the authorities at that level. They sat back and watched all those characters with the black masks and the handkerchiefs over their faces smashing windows, burning police cars, jumping on police cars, throwing rocks, and did absolutely nothing. If they had moved in on Saturday afternoon and arrested everyone wearing a black mask or a handkerchief, that would have simmered things down immensely. They did not move quickly, they did not move fast enough, they didn't do their job. The person in charge should have been brought to task on that, because you don't stand by with that number of police—I believe the number was in the thousands of police officers, and there might have been a few hundred of the real bad ones that were causing the majority of the trouble. They should have arrested all of them before they even dealt with the rest of the public, because there were a lot of peaceful protesters there who got dragged into it. I don't know why the police stood back, but they did. They shouldn't have.

The Public Works Protection Act, of course, certainly needed to be overhauled. The Liberal government unfortunately allowed the use of this bill to search citizens near the security fence during the G20 protests.

The amendments to the Police Services Act would grant powers to court security guards which were previously provided for under the Public Works Protection Act and would require any person entering or inside a courthouse to provide identification and provide information to assess their security risk, which is fine with me. But, Speaker, to search without a warrant any person, property or vehicle entering or attempting to enter premises where the court proceedings are conducted leaves me somewhat worried about possible abuse. Likewise, searching without a warrant—and using reasonable force if necessary—any person who is in custody where court proceedings are conducted or who is being transported to or from such premises or any property in the custody or care of that person seems odd. It seems to me that a person in custody would already have been subjected to a search to confirm that no weapons are being carried, and that their property also would have been searched. If they're in police custody, that would have been one of the first things the police did. So, why repeat it? This needs to be carefully clarified to me: what exactly they're going to do at the courthouse.

The new legislation narrowing the list of public works to only electricity-generating and nuclear facilities also causes me concern. This act covers very limited categories of infrastructure, and, like many other bills we've seen, cannot be clarified and amended through the regulations process. The bill would require amending legislation, not regulation. Although I do prefer that significant changes to any legislation be available for public comment, I also worry about the time that this process could take when the bill addresses perceived immediate danger.

The act designates security personnel at these facilities with the power to request any person who wishes to enter or is on the premises to produce identification and provide information for the purposes of assessing the person's security risk, and to search, upon consent, any person, property or vehicle entering the premises. Guards could exercise the specific powers only on the premises, and these powers would not apply off the premises. Citizens are given the option to enter the premises or leave.

But what I'm concerned about, Speaker: If a person decides not to be subjected to a search and not to enter, will they be considered suspicious, or possibly subjected to further scrutiny or perhaps even secret scrutiny? Very concerning, Speaker. Because they refused and feel their rights have been infringed upon, are they going to take a picture of them? Are they going to put them in a file as a possible suspicious person because they wouldn't follow

what the security guards wanted them to do? I'm very concerned about that.

It also muddies the waters of enforcement and the degree to which a non-police officer, but with some authority, can impose on citizens.

Another aspect of this that concerns me is that the private security personnel will have powers without the public accountability that the public forces are subject to—another back door to privatization of services that I believe should always remain in the public domain.

Another term that I would like to see very well defined is "search." I'm concerned that a strip search could be attempted by these private security personnel. The degree to which strip searches were used during the G20 was simply appalling and, I believe, very unnecessary.

I want this to be absolutely clear, Speaker: No private security employee ever has the authority to perform such a search when a public police officer is involved, and the use of a strip search is extremely limited in which it is used and very limited to specific public police officers with specific training. Sadly, over the past year or two, we've witnessed some rogue police officers taking this action when many of them, they admitted, were untrained. I would question the necessity of this.

I'm also concerned that we don't move into a state that will in any way infringe on citizens' rights to freedom of expression. I'm a little concerned; that weekend, a lot of people were out in Toronto with freedom of expression and in no way, shape or form were there to break windows or burn cars or to attack police officers or any of that sort. Well, they were certainly subjected to some pretty nasty treatment, which I think was actually embarrassing for Ontario and Canada. While at the same time ensuring that our public police officers are treated with the respect that they deserve in the performance of their duties—we certainly cannot disrespect our police forces, and we certainly have to co-operate to the best of our ability. But we certainly cannot let the police forces abuse their authority as well.

Our police officers are directed by their senior officers and must be directed in such a way that they are fully aware of their rights and their obligations: for example, to let a citizen know that there are new police authorities in a particular situation. Also, the leaders of the police, whether it be the Mounties, the OPP or the city police, should be responsible for the actions of their rank and file. They should be held accountable, because the orders come from them.

Officers should be directed to provide the new information before enacting it and making arrests like what happened to Mr. Vasey, a curious York University student who was subjected to the G20 regulation 233/10. Perhaps there should have been an information perimeter before a security perimeter, to give peaceful protesters a chance to exercise their rights and not be subjected to arrest or abuse. The tapes of the G20 police and protester interaction showed that many experienced police officers did just that: They told protesters what was happening and what would happen. Unfortunately, this did not happen in every case. There were responsible officers that warned the people, "If you go past this certain area or this line, it could result in some problems."

I recall comments made by protesters at one peaceful parade, who questioned why police officers were guarding their peaceful protest on Sunday while the bad protesters were committing public damage. Good question. Why did they use police resources to go after peaceful protesters when there were guys with masks and handkerchiefs smashing windows and smashing cars and burning police cars? What's going on? Is that the best use of your police resources? I think not. But as we should know, officers are directed by their senior officers and can't leave their assigned position or duty without possible repercussions to them. So they were following their orders. Were they directed properly? I don't think so. So, again, the legislation has to be clear that the direction to those on the front line ensures that the numbers of these problems become very few.

Listen, Speaker, I'm not naive to think that things are not going to happen in a riot situation which are uncontrollable and which the police are not expecting. The unexpected does happen, and the police have to use their best judgment to react at that time. But I'm sure some of the situations that weekend did not require the force that was done, and I'm sure some of the groups that they were dealing with, people in walkers and wheelchairs, and even one man who had his one leg removed in a tussle—that's a little bit much.

1420

Each has their own way of handling potentially tense public situations, and I think the mixed styles and signals caused some of the problems. The coordination, the delivery and the movements of the police that weekend were certainly not well planned. It seemed to be at one time that it wasn't clear to the public who exactly was in charge, the rioters or the police. Were the Toronto police chief, the RCMP, the OPP or some special forces not capable of handling a couple of hundred people with masks who were wielding sticks and burning and throwing things and lighting fires? Why couldn't they have moved in on those guys? I don't think the regular protesters would have done much to help those people who were smashing windows. They would probably say, "You deserve it. You're ruining my protest by going and smashing windows and making a mockery of the whole thing." I think the good citizens, the people who were there in good nature, certainly would not have done that.

Sorry; I see I've gone on and on here. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to follow the remarks of the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. I'll say at the outset that I agreed with a lot of his remarks, and a few I would disagree with.

One thing I think we both agree on is that there were a lot of peaceful protesters out to protest at the G20. There were also some violent protesters who decided that they

were going to come and cause some harm and some property damage. I think a lot of the focus has been on how we learn from this: How do we make this better?

Certainly when Chief Justice McMurtry came up with his report, what he asked us to do with his recommendations and what he was attempting to do was to bring in something that would strike a balance between personal liberties of us all and the personal safety of us all as well, or the public safety. I think he has struck a good balance. I think this legislation strikes a good balance.

If you look at some of the facts, if you look at how we got to the position we got to with the G20 and the G8, the federal government obviously is responsible for both, being international affairs. Huntsville had two years to prepare for the G8. That seems to me to be a reasonable amount of time. Toronto had four months to prepare for the G20. It seems to me that that's not a reasonable amount of time.

There was advice given that perhaps the G20 should be held on the exhibition grounds, should be held in a more suitable location. That advice was obviously ignored. I think had that advice been heeded at the time, we might not be talking about this today.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association is a group I respect. They have said, "What is needed is a comprehensive review that can examine the decisions and policies of all of the actors involved in the G20. [The G20] was a federal summit, hosted by the federal government, policed by a federal security agency and paid for by federal funds. The federal government is therefore best suited to coordinate such an inquiry...."

I think that's sage advice. The legislation that is before us today is one that all members of the House should support.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a pleasure to get up and comment on the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and some of the points he made.

I think one of the issues here was the taking of a law that was used properly over the last 60-some years but in an event that should have been a showcase in Toronto, in Canada and in Ontario turned bad because of the way the law was used and the way it was issued. Imagine a law in a free and democratic society where it was issued and only publicly issued after the event was over. When we look at the misuse of the law, where an amputee has his leg torn off, and instead of being helped was arrested—I mean, what danger is he going to be? This is just misuse of power.

I think one of the issues is that when laws are published in the back rooms, you don't allow your law enforcement officers to actually sit down and review the law and see where it could be to their advantage, what they could do to help people, and allow the people who were there truly as sightseers or as peaceful demonstrators to have their rights to actually voice their concerns. Instead, we have cases where casual shoppers were arrested because they didn't have ID on them. As the member from Stoney Creek very knowledgeably put down, they should be allowed to leave. If they're showing up and choose not to submit themselves to a search or do not have the proper ID, they should be allowed to leave without further persecution.

I think in this democracy of Canada and Ontario, we're looking for this law to be changed, and I will be supporting that, as my honourable member from Northumberland–Quinte West said, if only so that this government cannot follow through on the same actions that we've seen in 2010.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy to rise today and speak to this issue. It is an issue that just won't go away. The issue of democracy is with us here every day, and freedom of speech is something that we can never ignore the importance of.

I'm happy that the government is finally talking about this, but as many of my colleagues here have said, we're still waiting for an apology in this city. Whether it was people who were on the street because it was their neighbourhood, or people who were out to express their opinion about what was happening that day, or storekeepers who suffered real damages to their business, we still have not heard an apology or any responsibility taken from this government about what happened during the G20 summit here in Toronto. This is a matter of responsibility and culpability, and quite frankly, it wasn't planned for properly and it was a huge waste of precious tax dollars that could have been spent on any number of social services in this city that we need.

But one of the important things that we haven't recovered still is the confidence that people have in this city go out and voice their opinions. People to this day are still concerned that you can't go out and voice opposition to something that you feel strongly about. People will leave their children at home if they want to go out and demonstrate, whether that's International Women's Day or to protest a war that's happening in other parts of the world, or to protest some of the actions of this government, right here, that it will be taking and is taking. People are afraid to be on the streets here, and that is a big loss.

So we need guarantees from this government that this won't happen again. When these kinds of laws are negotiated behind closed doors, it does a disservice to all of us. I've got some real concerns that people's civil liberties will again be at risk in courthouses in this city. We need to make sure that there is accountability in this province, that citizens are welcomed in to look and see what's happening, and that they're not afraid that they'll be hurt when they do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Time for one last question or comment.

Ms. Soo Wong: I do want to acknowledge my colleague's comment today about this debate on the PWPA. Let's bring back the historical context about this piece. It started back in the G20 summits, where the federal government, without any consultation—and coming from the city of Toronto, I can tell you it was mayhem when

the federal government decided to have this event, an international event, without consulting the local government, the local communities, and then imposed this particular international event into our city.

We heard very clearly that the Canadian Civil Liberties Association has said that the federal government takes full responsibility for this G20, and we still haven't seen that at all in terms of repayment of the local businesses that have been damaged by this event. Furthermore, the government is taking responsibility in terms of repealing 70-year-old legislation that is totally outdated, and more importantly, addressing the concern from the former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry, the public, the civil liberties, the municipalities, the power producers, as well as justice officials and the police.

Moving forward, this is what this proposed legislation is about: How do we balance making sure the public is safe and the concerns raised by the community from the various associations in bringing this legislation to the community? So this legislation is listening but, more importantly, addressing it moving forward, because at the end of the day, it would be irresponsible for us as the House if we don't listen and we didn't act on the former chief justice's recommendation. This proposed legislation is talking about that, Mr. Speaker, and we must move forward because we cannot keep seeing what has happened at the G20 summit. What's before us right now is that there may be another international event imposed upon this city, this province again, and we're not ready. This proposed legislation allows for that.

1430

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll now return to the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, who, of course, has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the members from Oakville, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Davenport and Scarborough–Agincourt.

You know, Speaker, I really have a problem with the government's attitude. Now they're saying they shoulda, woulda, coulda. That archaic bill was enforced many, many years ago. They knew full well they were going to have a major event here in Toronto. They didn't do their homework. They didn't go and look to see that there could be abuses of the old legislation. They didn't even consider it. Then once it happened, they panicked, pushed something into place, and again, everything happened and the abuses happened, with no homework done, no preventive measures—nothing.

But the real concern I have is that nobody over there has said a word; no one has apologized. The Premier should have apologized. What is the big deal, Speaker? You stand up and you say, "We made a mistake. We were wrong. We're going to fix it." You don't become arrogant to the thing that—I was always taught to say sorry when I did something wrong. Why can't they? Are they above that? They cannot say, "I'm sorry; we screwed up"?

People would have thought a lot more of them if they had actually stepped up to the plate and said, "Yes, we made a mistake. Yes, this law is archaic. Yes, it should have been changed before the weekend here in Toronto." They had plenty of time to look at it. They knew the War Measures Act was there. They could have looked at it; they didn't. They just left it up to the authorities to take over, and then the backlash came back but not one word about, "We might have made a mistake. We're wrong. We're going to look at it. We're going to fix it."

This government is a knee-jerk government. They react after things happen instead of before. It's not good enough, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'm grateful to have this opportunity to rise in this House to speak to this bill. I do so on behalf of those citizens whose civil liberties were compromised during the peaceful demonstrations at the G20 summit in 2010 here in Toronto and the hard-working families of Ontario who are stuck with the tab.

I stand united with my fellow PC caucus members to support Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, which, as we all know, is a long-overdue legislative amendment by this government intended to correct a mistake made by this government.

As some of my colleagues have already pointed out when speaking to the bill at length and, more specifically, as we heard in an articulate history lesson from the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke earlier in the debate, the Public Works Protection Act first came to this province in 1939 and was developed and passed during Canada's involvement in World War II—a different time with much more dire implications on the public.

I'm grateful and relieved that this fine Legislature is updating the Public Works Protection Act to better reflect today's modern needs and to ensure that we do not see government manipulate legislation for political reasons at the expense of our civil liberties.

We unfortunately witnessed massive mismanagement of resources and public policy here in Ontario at a time when the global community had all eyes on us during the G8 and G20 summits. In the summer of 2010, Ontario hosted the G8 in Huntsville and the G20 here in Toronto. What it meant for Ontarians was simple: an overwhelming reduction of civil liberties at their personal expense.

When this government decided to implement Ontario regulation 233/10 under the Public Works Protection Act, they did it in secrecy and in great disrespect to the democratic nature of this House. As a new member of this Legislature, I'm highly motivated by the fact that we, as representatives of the people of Ontario, are entrusted to openly discuss and debate the rules and policies that directly impact the residents of this historic province.

Having had an opportunity to chat with some of my caucus mates who sat in this House during 2010, I've quickly realized the dire consequences that resulted from an impulsive action by the government of the day to preemptively condemn any average Ontarian who wished to participate within the public vicinity of the G20 venues in downtown Toronto.

I watched, myself, as obviously innocent people were herded like cattle and treated like criminals. I was appalled as a Canadian to watch from the sidelines as our highly trained and respectful police forces were forced to carry out the unjust and unnecessary demands of this government's vicious policy.

People around this world quickly learned the stories of average Canadians, such as the one shared by the member from Toronto Centre, who described how police in his own riding, in his own words, "arrested a woman who left her children at home when she was going to pick up milk because she didn't have ID." That's not the kind of province I want to live in; I know that.

The minister may argue that the police officers acted with no control by this government, but the reality of the matter is that the police services in this province were handed these extensive powers from a closed-door Liberal cabinet meeting, without being requested to do so by the Ontario Legislature. It's high time this government took its responsibilities seriously and realizes that the buck stops there. Still, today, there are no official records showing any type of request from the Ontario Provincial Police or the Toronto police commission asking the members of this Legislature—all of us—to enact Ontario regulation 233/10 under the Public Works Protection Act to assist them in securing the welfare of residents in this city during the G20.

Why should this government feel the necessity to put words in the mouths of security experts? The answer is simple, Speaker: So that they could spread blame around even wider in case things went wrong. And guess what? They went wrong. They went terribly wrong.

Of course, this government did what it does best: diffused accountability for its own actions. Just now we heard a deflection to the federal government. When does it stop? When do you take responsibility for your own actions? I haven't seen this government do it once since I've sat in this House; say, "Yeah, you know, we made a mistake. We're going to change things." Just own up to it. People respect you when you acknowledge a mistake; they don't when you try to cover it up.

Mr. Bill Walker: They'd be busy all day, every day.

Mr. Rod Jackson: They'd be busy all day.

I know math isn't the government's favourite subject, but eventually they have to understand that statistically, it's impossible that they're never at fault.

Let's talk about accountability for a moment. The minister would have you believe that Bill 34 is business as usual; that they saw a need to revise legislation and have it updated. I would insist that this bill is a reactive one, in response to massive government mismanagement under the Premier that took advantage of the ancient wartime bill for security at the G20 to exercise authoritative powers and contribute to its political legacy. In fact, the Liberal government was told by the Ombudsman and the McMurtry report that they must respond and be accountable for the secret undertakings of the G20 days.

Unfortunately, the cryptic implementation of these excessive measures resulted in exactly the opposite of what they were hoping to achieve: public order. Many individual protesters and bystanders who had the right to be there were unfairly detained, as in the case of the Toronto Centre constituent I've already mentioned. Concurrently, the people who were present during the summit to enact their right to freedom of speech and peaceful demonstration were confronted with new rules that have never been enforced in the modern history of our province, escalating tension between protesters and police very rapidly and likely inciting more violence than would have been realized otherwise.

How did this massive mismanagement turn out for the minister responsible? Well, quite well, actually. Such enormous mismanagement deemed the dismissal of the ministerial duties by the cabinet member at the time. Instead, the Premier's leadership, in all its wisdom, decided to quietly shuffle cabinet, appointing the member from St. Catharines as Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services on August 18, 2010. Today we have the Hon. Minister Meilleur filling that sticky billet.

Sadly, Speaker, this is just what Ontarians have come to expect from this government: big mistakes and pointing fingers, carried out on the backs of hard-working Ontario families. I would bet that on Ornge, we'll see a shuffle soon for the current health care minister as opposed to real accountability for the millions of taxpayers' dollars missing from publicly funded accounts at Ornge.

Speaking of lacking accountability, this takes me to my next point: the lack of transparency that goes hand in hand for this careless government. How can one apply the term "responsible government" when laws are being crafted and manipulated in the cabinet's closet without the scrutiny of a democratic system that we're all elected to uphold and then enforced without even making an effort to advise the public? Why didn't the Premier and the provincial authorities simply say that they wanted to be clear about their authority to defend the security fence, as Chief Blair explained after the fact? That way, protesters would have been aware of the new rule and civil libertarians and opposition parties would have had a chance to challenge it. As it turns out, 233/10 was not even published in the official record of provincial laws, the Ontario Gazette, as the member from Northumberland–Quinte West mentioned, until the summit was over.

1440

In closing, I'd like to quote the third recommendation made by Ontario's Ombudsman after the government was caught in the act, which "is intended to address the ministry's failure to ensure proper communication of a regulation that effectively increased police powers. Generally, police authority is conferred through enactment of legislation, accompanied by the openness, transparency, and accountability inherent in the democratic system of government. There is a real and insidious danger associated with using subordinate legislation, passed behind closed doors, to increase police authority, and I believe that this practice should be sedulously avoided.... In the

event that this occurs, it is imperative that the public be properly advised. In fact, in any case where police powers are extended, and particularly in protest situations, I believe that the public should be fully informed."

That's page 101 of Caught in the Act, by the Ombudsman.

This eerie lack of transparency not only defined the G20 but also is becoming apparent during the Pan Am planning process, another major international event that is coming to Toronto and the surrounding area and is being administered by the government. It sends shivers down your spine when you think what it will mean for hard-working families and taxpayers during these austere times.

I, along with the rest of my caucus, I think, will support this bill because of what it stands for in correcting a wrong and making sure that these types of violations of the democratic process and the freedoms of individuals in Ontario won't be trodden on again. It's a good amendment, and I applaud the minister for putting it forward. Unfortunately, it's just maybe a little "too little, too late." But certainly, we have to hope that in the future we won't have similar incidents like we saw at the G20, and hopefully won't see at the Pan Am games.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: Again, I rise to talk about a relatively new member of the House—I'm here this afternoon to listen, to gauge whether or not I think they have the mettle to stand up and do the right thing and say the right things. I must say that I am very impressed with the new member from Barrie. I'm impressed by his homework, by what he's done, by what he has said and by his careful analysis.

I commend him for taking a strong look at, and quoting at some length, the Ombudsman's report, Caught in the Act, because if anybody captured what went wrong, it wasn't just Roy McMurtry, as much respect as I have for him as a jurist, a former politician and a very brilliant man in his own right; it is André Marin, who very often gives voice to those who have no voice. It is André Marin and the Ombudsman to whom people turn when everything seems to have gone wrong and when governments have acted in error or without listening to common people.

It is the Ombudsman's report, Caught in the Act, that details so very carefully what went wrong in terms of this government, in terms of the act that was used, in terms of the secrecy that surrounded it and the consequences to ordinary, innocent people who found themselves in brush with and in breach of the law, and it was not even their fault.

Who could possibly have known about this act or that it was enforced? Certainly I, as a member of this Legislature at that point for some nine years, had no idea that the government had imposed this law in secrecy. I had no idea that 14 members of the cabinet sat around a table, plus the hangers-on, and voted for it. Nary a word was said against it by any one of them. Not one person stood up for civil liberties, and the member is absolutely right: We should all be shocked and appalled by what happened.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I too want to acknowledge my colleagues opposite from Barrie as well as from Beaches–East York in terms of their comments today about this proposed legislation, Bill 34.

I think, moving forward—this is legislation, but moving forward what we have heard from the community, what we heard from former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry, but also the balance between the issues of security, safety and civil liberty. This is what the repeal of the legislation is all about.

We all acknowledge in this House that a 70-year-old piece of legislation cannot be reflective of the 21st century. More importantly, the government is introducing a more modern bill, focusing on protecting the courts—that's a really key piece—and also protecting the nuclear and other power facilities, which is also a big concern for us because we know it is the protection of the community but also safety of all Ontarians but, at the same time, we also have to make sure we protect the civil liberties of every Ontarian.

Everybody in this House in this debate recognizes the concern that has been acknowledged earlier. But the most important piece is that we need to balance security versus those of the civil liberties. This appeal of the legislation is the right thing to do. Ontarians expect our government and also every member of Parliament to be respecting of this piece. At the end of the day, we must make sure that security concerns never be eroded in the sacrificing of the civil liberties of Ontarians.

So, at the end of the day, we must make sure the balance is there, and this proposed legislation talks about that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the speech from the member from Barrie on Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act and amend the Police Services Act.

The member from Barrie talked about the lack of transparency around the G20 and the secret way in which the Liberal government passed regulations that really resulted in innocent civilians being arrested and not understanding the rules.

To refresh your memory, Mr. Speaker, the cabinet actually met June 16, 2010, where they passed this regulation which was a bit confusing—that if you came within five metres of the fenced-off area in downtown Toronto, the police thought they could arrest you. Then they actually published it in e-Laws June 16, 2010. Of course, the G20 started June 21 and it didn't actually get published in the Ontario Gazette until July 3. There was a lot of lack of transparency. It wasn't publicized well and we all know the results of that.

When these G20s happen, it seems to be quite the normal thing now for there to be trouble and people

going there—"anarchists" I call them—to create trouble. Obviously the police need to be able to deal with that. I think anyone who's covering their identity by putting on hoods the police should be able to deal with. But this was not the right way.

Our party is supporting repealing Bill 34. I do think we'll need to go to committee because I know the NDP has raised concerns about schedule 2 of the bill. I hope it goes to committee and people can go through it with a fine-tooth comb to make sure that it achieves what it is supposed to achieve.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to comment on the member from Barrie's submission. It was very good. It seems to be a common theme between this side of the House, that we're wondering where the apology was: "I'm sorry. We made a mistake. We should haven't done that. We could have looked into it. We could have done some research on the results, the implications or the feedback from other situations in other jurisdictions that have had the same problems. We could have done a little more homework to find out how the police handled it."

We've had some good examples. We've had Seattle. There were some problems in Montreal, the riots. We've had all kinds of templates that we could have used to better prepare ourselves for this summit in Toronto. I don't think we did our homework, and I don't think they followed.

But for the government to continually pass the blame on the feds and Harper—you know, "It's all their fault." Well, come on, folks. You had a cabinet meeting—a secret one. You gave them the powers, the police, the local organizations, to do what they could do, and you were responsible for that. Your cabinet sat around that table with the Premier and allowed it to go ahead. You didn't question it. You were all good tin soldiers and took the salute, did what you were told: no questions, no input, no "I'm a little concerned this may get off the rails"—nothing. But, okay, you made a mistake. So now what you do is, you stand up in this House and tell the people of Ontario, "We made a mistake. This is never going to happen again and we're sorry: s-o-r-r-y." That's all the people of Ontario wanted to hear from this government, and they couldn't do that. I was taught at a very young age to say sorry when you did something wrong, and I have no problem saying sorry if I'm wrong. They have a problem and they've got to fix it.

1450

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Barrie for his reply.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'd like to thank, first of all, the member from Beaches–East York for his kind words, and the members from Scarborough–Agincourt, Parry Sound–Muskoka, and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek. It certainly is a pleasure to serve with all of you. I appreciate your comments.

We do see a common theme here, and the common theme is accountability. What we need to see from the government is accountability, to be accountable for the actions that you take. Like I said before, we haven't seen a whole lot of that over the past several months, or even years in some cases.

Interjection: Eight.

Mr. Rod Jackson: The last eight years for sure.

But the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is quite correct in saying there is no shame in saying you're sorry. There's no shame in admitting you may have made a mistake and that you're going to correct it. We haven't seen that. We don't see it. I too was taught as a young child to own up to your mistakes, correct them and move on. It is easier to move on, and you know what? I'll tell you a little secret: It feels great when you do it. When you are able to feel good about what you're doing, what you're doing means even more.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Do the right thing.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Do the right thing. Unfortunately, the member for Northumberland–Quinte West isn't here to hear that, but—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: He's right in front of you.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Oh, he's right in front of me. Pardon me.

We do have another major international event, the Pan Am Games, coming up in the next few months, in the next couple of years, and we have a chance to get it right. It would be a shame to see the same sort of circus go around this event. I know that the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek shares my sentiments in that. When we see the way they're starting to approach this, where there's still secrecy around the transportation, around security, around the budget, this doesn't bode well. Let's open this up. Let's start acting like a government that is responsible and is willing to take responsibility and do the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak to this bill, and I've listened with interest to the input of the previous speakers.

First, let me say that I'm pleased to see that the government intends to repeal the Public Works Protection Act. The use of that particular piece of legislation during the G20 was a low point for the government as they trampled all over the constitutional rights of Ontarians. If we think back to that time, we remember that nobody seemed to know exactly what it meant. They didn't know because regulation was enacted to enhance the security at the summit—but didn't tell anyone that it had been enacted. No one knew what the law was.

It was unclear that the security perimeter was designnated as a public work. Nobody knew where to go and what the extraordinary powers of the Public Works Protection Act meant, what it meant to peaceful protesters and what it meant to people who were just going about their daily business. Citizens soon found out just how easy it was to find themselves on the wrong side of the law. The results were over 1,100 people arrested, the vast majority for no good reason. It was a disgrace that outraged thousands upon thousands of Ontarians, some

of them present on the street and shocked at the treatment they received, others who were watching at home on their televisions and were wondering how this could be happening in Ontario. As the stories unfolded over the next number of days—stories of innocent people being not just prevented from going about their lawful business, but being arrested for doing just that—their wonder changed to feelings of revulsion and fear about the injustices that had taken place.

So, yes, I will be happy to see the end of the Public Works Protection Act, but I do have concerns about this bill, and I would like to take some time to talk about them.

While the bill repeals the Public Works Protection Act, it also amends the Police Services Act and enacts the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act. Although the Public Works Protection Act would die as a result of this bill, some of its provisions continue to find life through these two other acts.

The bill gives extra powers to security personnel working in our courthouses. Members of the public will have to justify their presence at a courthouse. There would be a right to search people and vehicles entering the premises of any courthouse without warrant—very concerning, Mr. Speaker.

Under the amendments outlined in schedule 2 of the bill, the Police Services Act would now confer the right to security personnel to require that a person entering the court premises provide information for the purpose of assessing whether the person is a security risk. What does that mean? What type of information? How much information? The previous part of the bill refers to a requirement to produce identification, so it can't mean that. Can a person be refused entry because, in the eyes of the security personnel present, there was insufficient information presented? It would certainly seem so. In fact, if they don't immediately leave the premises, they are guilty of an offence and subject to a fine of up to $2,000 or 60 days in prison, according to the amendments contained in this bill. I can see that in some circumstances, we may want to be able to avail ourselves of certain provisions to ensure courthouse security. But of all cases before the courts, very few would be placed in a high-enough-risk category to warrant such attention.

Surely such provisions are not necessarily at all times needed in our courthouses. Can it really be necessary that these powers be conferred to security guards going about their regular workday and be applicable to anyone and any vehicle on the premises? What exactly are those premises?

Mr. Speaker, would each of us be confident that we could stand outside of any courthouse in Ontario and know what the perimeter of these premises are? I doubt it very much. It's unrealistic for us to think that the citizens of Ontario will know what their rights are and how they've changed when they cross some poorly defined line, perhaps just by entering a parking lot—no gates, no fence, nothing.

We saw at the G20 just how such broad powers can be abused. With this bill, when we look at our recent history, we should strive to ensure that our constitutional rights are preserved. Surely, it's better to give such powers as need arises rather than to have them as a default for all locations and all cases.

Similarly, the bill assigns powers to security staff in electricity generating facilities and nuclear facilities—powers to request ID and powers to search a person or a vehicle. Again, as with the definition of the premises for the courthouse, we must ask, what is the definition of "electricity generating facility"? Think of the many small facilities that are in Ontario nowadays that generate electricity. The bill takes its definition of a nuclear facility from the federal Nuclear Safety and Control Act, but there is no similar definition for an electrical generating facility. That has yet to be prescribed. How easy will it be for an innocent person to find themselves on the wrong side of the law simply because they didn't know that these special rules applied to the particular spot where they were standing?

The bill does make it clear that a person should have the option to leave upon finding out the requirements of entry. I would say that that's a good thing, but really, it's something that would seem obvious to any right-thinking person.

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But that's not what happened in Toronto in June 2010 during the G20 at that time. Citizens were arrested for failing to provide ID, even though they had decided not to enter the security zone.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I say that we need to be vigilant. We have grown as a province and as a country because we value and respect the civil liberties of our citizens. It is one of the reasons why so many people from around the world choose Ontario as their home.

Sometimes governments have seen fit to enact laws that restrict those civil liberties. Sometimes it's for limited time periods. Sometimes, such as the Public Works Protection Act, which has been in place since way back in 1939 as the Second World War was starting, they last much longer.

When a decision is made to put restrictions on the public, we have a responsibility to keep our respect for civil liberties on the front burner and have them as our prime consideration. We have a responsibility to remember the atrocious actions that took place in June 2010, and we must ensure that we are not opening a door that allows actions similar to those we saw during the G20.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to acknowledge my colleague's comments from Hamilton Mountain.

Recognizing the concerns raised by the members opposite, the repeal of Bill 34 is very timely, given the fact that our government and Ontarians are looking forward to the Pan Am Games coming forward to us. But the key piece about this repealing of Bill 34 is that it ensures the balance between security concerns and the

civil liberties of all Ontarians. That's the most important piece, Mr. Speaker.

The other big thing: The member opposite has raised a concern about the whole issue of the power to search and what have you. We already right now, in our court system, where—individuals will be searched when they go to a courthouse. That's already given. But what is right now before us is the fact that—concerns raised both by individuals and former Chief Justice McMurtry on municipalities, the power producers and the police with respect to this 70-year-old legislation. Making sure that the security of our power plants, the security of the courthouses—they must be safe at all times. At the same time, every Ontarian's civil liberties must be protected. That's what this is all about.

When we move this proposed legislation forward, going to committees is where we're going to have further discussion for the debate about this matter. This is a good thing, Mr. Speaker, because at the end of the day, all of us have before us now an opportunity to comment on this piece of proposed legislation. But going forward, going to committees, is where more work can be done—refinement and having a conversation and working with our community partners, making sure this legislation will be the best it can be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased to rise today and to add to the discussion on Bill 34.

This has been a welcome reminder of the essential role of free and open debate. It has also been a sobering reminder of the consequences when government recklessly chooses another path.

In the lead-up to the G20 summit, the government across from us chose secrecy over open, intelligent debate. It called a secret cabinet meeting to dust off some obscure wartime powers, the Public Works Protection Act. It chose to secretly extend powers that held profound implications for civil liberties in the province of Ontario. It gave extravagant powers to the police—powers arguably at odds with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms—but never made the public aware of that fact. Then they would have us believe that this string of calculated decisions was someone else's doing.

During Toronto's G20 summit, more than 1,000 people were arrested. Many were released without criminal charges being laid. Some were troublemakers, but many peaceful protesters ended up snared by this unseen trap, and many who were swept up were just curious bystanders.

It was an ugly betrayal. It was like watching a dictatorship steamrolling over people's freedoms. The G20 summit reminds us that we must never take our civil rights for granted. Ontarians want to believe their political representatives are here to defend their best interest in a way that is transparent and accountable, not in a fog of secrecy but in the light of day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to comment on my seatmate the honourable member for Hamilton Mountain's interjections on this bill.

It conjures up the whole nature of the G20 summit here in Toronto and what an abject failure the entire process actually was. What indeed did we get out of that?

In 2008, at the height of the biggest financial meltdown that the planet had seen since the Depression—we spent $2 billion to have us tell leaders of the free world to enact austerity budgets. They spent $2 billion to tell us to stop spending money. What a ridiculous waste of energy, of talent, of money.

In the process, they disenfranchised those who took to the streets, who already knew that message was coming. They disenfranchised them of their rights to collectively have their voices heard, and they threw them in jail. They kettled them. They enacted measures that absolutely crushed any measure of peaceful protest that they were to enact.

Of course, the measures and the response from the government side was overreaching and certainly went too far. That's why we're all pleased here today to see that bill go the way of the dodo bird.

In fact, let's take a look at why we hold these summits in the first place and what value they actually bring to Canadians and to Ontarians. I could get you a lot of examples of people who have good ideas in my community of Essex that could bring this province back, and that's about jobs, not about kettling and disenfranchising civil liberties.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: I'm pleased to rise to make a few comments with respect to Bill 34 this afternoon. I'm pleased to hear that the others are supportive of the changes that we're bringing forward with Bill 34, but the conversation has really been centred around what happened at the G20 here in downtown Toronto. As I'm listening and I reflect back to that time—I wasn't a member. I was in Windsor, so I was watching all of this unfold on television and I couldn't believe what was happening in Toronto, and wondering how this transpired.

Well, we had the G20. We had world leaders coming into our city. We had two to three months to plan for this type of an event, as opposed to the two or three years that a world event like this should have taken. In protecting our world leaders and trying to maintain our community safety—the event took place.

But after that, there was a review. Discussions took place; consultations took place. We're moving forward. We're listening to what we heard and the changes are coming forward. We're making the changes. That's what I do know.

I believe that all parties involved at that time really meant to protect the world leaders while maintaining community safety. Nobody had ulterior motives, nobody meant to do any harm through this period of time, and I think we need to focus on that as well in terms of what was going on in that period, on those days. Hindsight is

always 20/20, to go back and say, "Well, this shouldn't have happened; that shouldn't have happened," but when you are tasked with the event that was taking place at that time, people were trying to do as well as they could through that period of time.

I'm glad we're moving forward. We're listening to advice. We're following recommendations, and we're focusing on modern, focused rules. I think that's what we should be focused on here in terms of how we continue to move forward rather than always going backwards and saying, "With hindsight, 20/20."

1510

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Hamilton Mountain, who now has two minutes to reply.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to thank the members from Scarborough, Burlington, my seatmate from Essex, and from Windsor West for participating in this debate with me today.

I was listening. I realize the fact that nobody meant for anything bad to happen, but things did happen poorly. So how are we going to change this to make sure that when we're implementing these kinds of bills in the future, people understand? Will signage be provided to let people know of their expectations before entering these facilities, so that when they come into question and they are being asked that, they're not being thrown off guard? Will we have some guards who are on duty who abuse that power and take advantage of the situation, that they are allowed to lay fines, arrest people, put people in jail? We can't be guaranteed that the G20 won't be happening all over again in a courthouse, where things might be a little hot-seated that day and people are anxious to be inside the courthouse and they don't know their rights.

So these are the kinds of things that we need to make sure are being changed when it comes to the committee level—and knowing that everybody who has participated in the many hours of this debate has been heard and that those suggestions will be coming to committee. I think that when we say that we're going to work together to make things better, that's how it happens. We have these discussions for a reason. When it goes to committee, hopefully, these changes will be looked at and they will be implemented, and then everybody can be assured that the G20 won't happen again.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a beautiful summer-like day and kind of reminiscent of that day back in 2010, I believe it was, for the G20 summit. It was hot then too.

Before I begin my remarks on Bill 34, I just thought I would take this opportunity to mention that Saturday night was a big night for my home municipality, Stirling-Rawdon. Stirling is the only remaining Ontario municipality left in the Kraft Hockeyville contest, so I think now is a very important time for everybody here in the Legislature to rally around Stirling and make sure that they get the hundred grand—and the NHL pre-season game, too.

As I begin, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from a former leader who understood what secrecy does to a democratic society. "The very word 'secrecy' is repugnant in a free and open society; and we are as a people ... historically opposed to secret societies, to secret oaths and to secret proceedings." The author of that quote is John F. Kennedy. Being as that lesson would have been more than 45 years old on that hot summer day here in 2010, you would think that the Premier would have been able to grasp the meaning of such a statement and that there was no secrecy necessary, as a number of the members of the Legislature would have very happily come back to debate what is now the result of Bill 34.

This government has had a rather notorious inability to simply level with the Ontario people over their eight years in power. We heard "no new taxes" before the 2003 election; it became "brand new taxes" after the 2003 election. We heard "no more new taxes" before the 2007 election, and it became the HST, as we know, after the 2007 election. We could get into the long list of ways that the green energy debacle has been implemented throughout this province, but I think we'd be here until doomsday if we continued to go down that trail on this beautiful spring-like day.

Don't even get us started on Ornge. There are still things about that particular organization that the government either can't or won't share with this House.

Scandal and secrecy hasn't always been the order of the day for this government. We shouldn't be here talking about this bill at all. What I and every member on this side of the House have spent the last few weeks talking about is the culture of misdirection and closed-door decision-making that has been fostered over the last eight years at Queen's Park.

Mr. Speaker, historically, legislation like the Public Works Protection Act is invoked in what would be considered exigent circumstances. This would imply that the circumstances couldn't be foreseen and that the government had to act to protect the public from a threat that they couldn't anticipate. Those historical threats and circumstances were described in a very impressive performance, I might add, a couple of weeks ago by my friend here, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He has quite a way with words. That was an excellent performance on that day, Mr. Yakabuski. I believe the member from Essex thought you should get your own—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yak Yak's.

Mr. Todd Smith: —Yak Yak's. It's a good idea.

The member for St. Catharines spoke to this thinking when he answered questions in the House after the G20 riots. The minister said, "My colleague needs to remember the potential security threat. We had 20 of the probably top targets for terrorists in the province of Ontario, in downtown Toronto, where the federal government decided to have this particular gathering of international people. Second, we had threats" from "the

Black Bloc that there was going to be violence" on that day.

The minister stated, when forced to answer questions in this House, that the government had threats prior to the initiation of the conference. This should naturally lead to questions of how far in advance the government had these threats. Clearly they had them far enough in advance to pass an order in council. If they had them far enough in advance to convene a meeting to issue an order in council, then they had them far enough in advance to call this House back for a session to implement the act after referring it to the committee of the whole, but they chose not to. As I've said, Mr. Speaker, this government, when presented with the above board, accountable way of doing business, has a track record of not going that route.

The minister's answer suggests that the mere presence of dignitaries in the downtown Toronto core was enough to make the government consider the use of Public Works Protection Act powers. This kind of activity surrounding G8 and G20 summits isn't new, and would not have been new for any member of this House. The history of protests surrounding these events would have been well known months in advance of the G20 here in Toronto.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read in the House statements by the former Prime Minister of the UK, Tony Blair, in regard to protests at these summits: "The ... G8 in Birmingham" had been my first "right in the city centre, but the world of summitry had changed in the seven years since then, even before September 11 and certainly after it. We live in an era of publicity through protest. Because the modern media works essentially through impact, protesters know that if they protest in a sufficiently disruptive way, they lift the agenda from the democratically elected politicians." That's exactly what happened here.

If the Premier's argument is the same as the minister's argument that the Public Works Protection Act was being used to maintain safety and security in Toronto during the summit, why then did the Premier feel the need to pass the act in secret? Did he believe that the members of the opposition parties in this House would have any less interest in protecting Ontario families than he professed to have?

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, a couple of weeks ago, thoroughly catalogued the abuses of the Public Works Protection Act that have made the presentation of Bill 34 necessary. He outlined the examination made by the province's Ombudsman about how the province acquitted itself on that weekend in Toronto. Many of us from across Ontario watched as a rough collection of vandals and thieves terrorized the downtown core. With Caught in the Act, the Ombudsman catalogued in detail how the government's actions contributed to the atmosphere of that weekend.

The argument can be made, and should be made, that the act should have been updated regardless of whether or not the G20 ever occurred. The temptation to governments, when in possession of a tool that allows them to claim unchecked power, will almost always be to invoke those powers. They'll almost always do this in the name of protecting people, and in the end these tactics and tools are almost always questionable or of no effectiveness.

As someone who spent his career in journalism, it's hard for me to conceive how scenes from a G20 weekend could have looked worse. I was actually in the newsroom at Quinte Broadcasting in Belleville, watching on that day as police cars were torched in the streets; cops in riot gear; masked criminals looting stores and destroying property, smashing windows. I hope I can be excused for wondering what the government had hoped the result of the Public Works Protection Act would be, when its actual results were such a dismal failure. The only thing this G20 summit produced was a lot of talk show fodder for months and months on Toronto talk radio.

1520

Another thing that's amazing about these heavy-handed tactics is that they're often dismal failures. There were 1,100 people arrested on G20 weekend, but only 140 were charged. That gives the authorities from that weekend a success rate only slightly better than the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Interjection: Oh!

Mr. Todd Smith: Sorry.

Of the 140 people, only two were actually charged under the Public Works Protection Act. That's two people. This Liberal government abridged the civil liberties of countless Toronto residents for two arrests.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association has taken issue with how unusual it is for the government to pass a law involving such sweeping police powers in secret. It was noted by many of these same associations that when the current Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services introduced Bill 34, she had still refused to offer an apology for this unbelievable abuse of the government's power. Justice McMurtry referred to the old law as a loaded weapon that threatened civil liberties, and yet the arrogance of the government seems such, Mr. Speaker, that they can't even bring themselves to utter an apology to the people of Ontario. It seems like everybody who has spoken on this side of the House has asked for a public apology.

As I outlined earlier, there was no need for the secrecy. This House could have and should have been consulted on this act well in advance of the opening of the G20 conference. The member from St. Catharines has told the House that the government had sufficient reason in advance to exercise these powers to protect. If that's the case, then the government undermined the right of the democratically elected representatives of the people of Ontario to review what evidence they had and make our own determinations on whether to grant the Premier's request for such extraordinary powers.

I'd like to cite the Ombudsman's report for a moment: "There is a real and insidious danger associated with using subordinate legislation, passed behind closed

doors, to increase police authority, and I believe that this practice should be ... avoided." It's my sincere belief that this government willingly showed disregard for the members of this House by acting in such a way. While we will be supporting Bill 34, we think it's incumbent on this government, this minister and this Premier to apologize to the people of Toronto and apologize to the people of Ontario for the secrecy that led to this day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thanks to the member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

I've spoken on this bill before, but it's always a privilege to get up and speak about civil liberties—civil liberties not being the operative topic on that G20 weekend, a weekend that I was active on every single day in peaceful protests.

The member should take note, however, that thousands and thousands of peaceful protesters were on the streets and they were the ones targeted, not the very small handful of people who were actually causing destructive damage.

There was a wonderful posting on Facebook today that said George Orwell's book 1984 was a work of fiction, it was not a manual to be followed. On that weekend, it was as if it was a manual to be followed by this government. This was a secret little regulation brought to play that was meant to be brought in during wartime. This House was in session. This House was in session, and not even backbench Liberals knew what their government was doing. I gather not even all members of cabinet knew what their government was doing.

But I suppose we shouldn't be surprised. Remember, it was the Liberal Party that brought in the War Measures Act, the most egregious example of trampling on civil rights right across the country. Everyone lost their civil rights from coast to coast during the War Measures Act.

So the Liberal Party has a history of trampling on civil rights, but did we ever think it was going to happen in Ontario? Did we ever think it was going to happen in Toronto? No. It was absolutely horrendous what went down.

Of course, an apology is in order. Even more than an apology, what we need is a real public inquiry, because we need to call our politicians to account for what happened that weekend. The NDP called for such an inquiry; it was overlooked. Now we're calling for an apology and it should have been an inquiry. Of course, that has been ignored as well.

But let's not rewrite history. Let's face the facts as they were. That was a weekend of shame, shame for the Liberal Party, shame for the government of Ontario, shame for everyone who happened to call themselves a peaceful citizen in Toronto that weekend.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on the comments that were read out today by the member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

I just want to say a few things. What people are not mentioning around the debate today—I've listened carefully—is what we did afterwards. The government requested immediately that a former Conservative Attorney General, Roy McMurtry, look into this matter and prepare recommendations, which he did. Following that, we came up with new legislation, which is in front of us today, which we're debating today. I think that's very important to note.

I also want to point out that this government only had four months to prepare for this summit. The Conservatives decided to have it in downtown Toronto instead of having it at Exhibition Place, and I think that that made a big difference. How do you protect downtown Toronto?

I also agree with the right to have civil liberties, which the member mentioned. You can't just create a police state. There were incidents that occurred. The Toronto Star mentioned quite a bit recently how many charges were being laid against the police and what happened, but we took action. I think it's very important to notice that we took action. We didn't sit back and twiddle our thumbs. It was a federal summit; the federal government decided to have it in downtown Toronto instead of having it somewhere else.

There were definitely perils in having it in downtown Toronto. People were hurt—definitely. I'm not denying that part of it. I think our government recognized that, and we immediately sent former Justice Roy McMurtry to take action on this. We didn't sit back and do nothing about it. That's important to notice. That is why this legislation is before us today. That's why I support this legislation in front of us today. I think it's important to strike a balance between civil rights and good government, to strike a balance between personal liberties and public safety, and hopefully this bill accomplishes that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Shurman: This is the first opportunity I've had to rise and make any comments pertinent to the discourse in which my friend from Prince Edward–Hastings, a relatively new member, has engaged. I enjoy having him as a colleague and I enjoyed listening to his comments.

Notice, Speaker, that in the course of this debate there's been a awful lot of angst, not to say anger, expressed about what went on in this city during the G20. Given that the Liberals have a great penchant for naming bills, probably better than any other government in the history of Ontario, they probably should have named this bill "locking the stable door after the horse has bolted act, 2012," because that's what this really is.

I can tell you that I personally know people who are shopkeepers and restauranteurs in the entertainment district who experienced huge losses of business in that period of time, who sustained losses and damages that were not covered by insurance, who have yet to be paid for what befell them. The fact of the matter is, this government, under the cover of secrecy, basically under the darkness of night, met in cabinet and used arcane

legislation that should have been scrapped long ago to provide powers for law enforcement to do things that under ordinary circumstances they would never have been allowed to do.

So now we have legislation here, and I'm supposed to say I'm voting for it—and I am—and thank God we've got it because it'll prevent this from ever happening again. But the fact of the matter is that you can't just lock the stable door after the horse has bolted every single time. Look at the debate we're hearing in question period every single day in the morning on the question of Ornge. We hear that minister also saying, "We'll bring legislation and fix it."

You know, if that's the case, Speaker, what we should have is Dalton McGuinty bringing legislation that apologizes to the people of Ontario for what he's done for the past eight years and swears it'll never happen again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise to comment on the words of the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. It is a pleasure to listen to him. I have heard him several times now in the Legislature. Although he is a relatively new member, he speaks with some considerable passion.

I am a man who loves quotes, and so when he stood up and gave a quote about secrecy by the late president John F. Kennedy, it was well taken and well used. So I commend him for his use of the quotation.

He went on to talk about secrecy. You know, many of the things that go on here are in secret, secret to the members of this House; secrets known only to a select few who sit around the cabinet table, and sometimes not even them. The longer that new members stay here, the longer you will understand that the decisions are made by a select few, largely in secret, and not conveyed to you until sometimes it is too late.

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The most recent one that we all must have had phone calls on is the great secret about telling ordinary people, mostly seniors, that they can't have their money back at income tax time. That was all done in secret. That was all signed by the Premier and the finance minister without a single reference to this House. Those are the kind of things that happen here. It's done in secret. This bill was no different; what happened at the G20 is no different. That's why we have to shine a great, big light over there. The ones who can shine the biggest and best light are the ones on the backbench who stand up and just try to defend the indefensible. Stop defending the indefensible. Start shining a light on the secrets, because if you don't do it, it's going to be very hard for anyone to.

You know, it was said that the government acted—I listened to the member from Scarborough Southwest—that the government recognized it. Sure, they recognized it; then they stonewalled everything. They asked McMurtry to report after the election. They asked the Ombudsman to report after the election. The whole thing was stonewalled so that the government wouldn't have to answer any questions during the time of the election. It's a reality.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the other members of the Legislature for speaking: from Parkdale–High Park, Scarborough Southwest, my friend from Thornhill, and from Beaches–East York as well, who highlights the secrecy that does occur in the current government that we have here in Ontario. It hasn't just happened as a result of the G20; it has happened in many, many circumstances, as the member from Beaches–East York explains, including, most recently, with the lump sum payments that are being denied to our seniors, people that have been counting on these lump sum tax credits, and then suddenly they disappear on them.

There are so many examples, and I outlined many of them over my 10 minutes or so that I spoke, where there has been secrecy that has occurred in this government. But I go back to this very act that brings us to Bill 34 today. There were several members who are still occupying seats on the government side of the House who aided the then Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services—presently the Minister of Northern Developments and Mines, by the way—in his aim of depriving this House of its democratic right to review legislation. That's what happened. It was secret.

I often wonder, as I look over here and I see some of the members who are still there, like the members from Peterborough, Ottawa Centre, Ottawa–Orléans, Mississauga–Streetsville, Willowdale and Ajax–Pickering—they were all here that day. They were all in that inner circle. Many other members of the cabinet and many other backbenchers on that side of the House weren't here, but I wonder, for those who were in that meeting that day, if they regret the decision that they made to enact these powers. I would love to get the answers, and they have the opportunity while we're debating this, but for some reason they remain silent.

So I think it's time for an apology, again, from the Premier, I think it's time for an apology from this government, and remember to vote Stirling in Krafthockeyville.com. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Further debate? I recognize the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to be able to add some comments on the debate on Bill 34, Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act. That's a long title. There has been a lot of good debate raised on this issue and I'm going to sound like a broken record on some of it, but I think some of it is worthy of being repeated.

Specifically, this bill will repeal—I have to read some of this, because some of this I don't have know out of my head. This bill will repeal the Public Works Protection Act, a measure that was invoked at the start of World

War II and in 2010. I wasn't around at the start of World War II, but my father was. He told me of some of the things that happened in Europe at the start of World War II, things that probably the Ontario Legislature heard about and was guarding against.

My question is—again, it was invoked in 2010—who was going to invade us in 2010? And why wasn't that discussion held in this chamber? It's a very, very serious question, because the first time this act was invoked, we were worried about being invaded or about the world as we knew it being taken over. Who was going to take us over in 2010?

Were there security concerns in those days? Certainly. Were there mistakes made on all levels? Certainly.

I'm not a great guy for quotes, but there's one I'm going to use because it sends chills down my spine. I think it has been read here before. It's from the Ombudsman, from André Marin, but I think I would like to read it again.

"Regulation 233/10, passed to enhance security during the G20 summit, should never have been enacted. It was likely unconstitutional. The effect of regulation 233/10, now expired, was to infringe on freedom of expression in ways that do not seem justifiable in a free and democratic society. Specifically, the passage of the regulation triggered the extravagant police authority found in the Public Works Protection Act, including the power to arbitrarily arrest and detain people and to engage in unreasonable searches and seizures. Even apart from the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the legality of regulation 233/10 is doubtful. The Public Works Protection Act under which it was proclaimed authorizes regulations to be created to protect infrastructure, not to provide security to people during events. Regulation 233/10 was therefore probably invalid for having exceeded the authority of the enactment under which it was passed. These problems should have been apparent, and given the tremendous power regulation 233/10 conferred on the police, sober and considered reflection should have been given to whether it was appropriate to arm officers with such authority. This was not done."

An incredibly important threshold was crossed that day.

Mr. Marin's comments could be used to describe a totalitarian government. The only difference, and the biggest difference is, that in a totalitarian government no one has the right to stand up in a place like this and talk about what happened. We should all be incredibly proud of that, that we can stand here and discuss this and hopefully admit where we've gone wrong and how we can make things better. When things like that happen, we are so close—it's such a small step. "Oh, it is just one thing we did in secret." But it's such a small step because it erodes people's belief.

That's part of our problem with politics these days, that there's such a difference between what actually happens and the spin we use. This is horses versus health care. We should have a good debate on health care and a good debate on OLG slots, but we shouldn't mix the two together. We're doing the same thing. When spin overtakes democracy—kind of like it did here, and this one is much more serious but we experience it all the time.

One of the biggest problems by doing this in secret, perhaps the biggest problem, is, if the government had debated this and had come to this—even if they came to the same conclusion—if it had been made public, it could have been used as a deterrent. The use of secret force isn't a deterrent. If you know what the consequences are, you would perhaps change your behaviour. But when the government doesn't say what the consequences are, again, it is almost a totalitarian move, and it deeply scares me. I think it scares a lot of us.

Should this bill be repealed? Yes. There are things in this bill that I still question. Do we support this bill? Probably, yes. But there are still things that—again, if you look at the part about the courthouses. If I'm correct, I believe that under the new act someone will be able to question you for your reason for wanting to enter the courthouse. Isn't our purpose in a democracy that people—once you get to the point where innocent people fear government, you kind of lose belief in democracy. Are we going there? From responsible government to Big Brother? Again, it's really important. It's not just a little detail, because in a public place like a courthouse, like this Legislature, what would be the step? "Well, since it works so well in courthouses, perhaps we should question people before they go into the stands here to see what their purpose is."

1540

If you're going to a courthouse, and you're not posing a threat, and you just want to watch the proceedings, why should you have to tell someone what you're doing? What purpose is that? Are we really trying to enhance security, or are we just trying to put a button on things? And it's a very important point.

The third: You want to make electrical generating systems safer. I can see that. Once again, I'd like more detail, because we hear a lot of talk about microFIT and wind turbines, and I'm wondering if we need a security detail around a few thousand wind turbines.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, but, once again, if you are going—and hopefully when this bill goes to committee, all those things will be hammered out.

But when a bill replaces something that basically trampled some of the rights that we've had people go to other countries and die for—and the bill that this replaces trampled them—I think we have to be very careful, incredibly careful, and make sure that it doesn't happen again.

The one thing that—and I'd like to close with this: We have all made mistakes. I don't think there's a person sitting in this room who hasn't made a mistake. Because if you've never made a mistake, you know what? You've never really tried.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Oh, he's never made a mistake? That's okay.

But the one thing about making mistakes is, you admit them, you learn from them and you become a better person, a better government, a better society.

I hope at some point that even if this government is unwilling or unable to apologize to the people of Ontario as a whole, I sincerely hope that they apologize to the people whom they treated incredibly badly during the G20 summit, because they deserve at least that. They deserve much more than that, but they definitely deserve an apology from the people who trampled on their rights.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: As discussed already, the G20 summit was a federally led event.

Former Chief Justice McMurtry's report following the G20 made a number of important recommendations about balancing personal liberties and public safety. We've listened to the public, civil liberties groups, municipalities, power producers, justice officials and the police. We brought in former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry to give us his best advice.

It's clear that the security concerns today are very different from those of the Second World War era, when the Public Works Protection Act was adopted. We're getting rid of the 70-year-old Public Works Protection Act and introducing modern, focused rules for protecting courts, nuclear and other power facilities, while also—protecting civil rights for all Ontarians is important.

In my riding, in Pickering–Scarborough East, the Pickering nuclear facility is located there, and they feel strongly about this as well.

When asked about the need of a public inquiry, Tim Hudak said that we don't need a long process. We also saw other pieces of media reinforcing this point. Commissions of inquiry are very lengthy, expensive undertakings, and we have received advice from the Ombudsman's report and former Chief Justice McMurtry to that effect. I think in this fiscal environment, too, we need to be extremely careful before undertaking commissions of inquiry.

It's important to remember that the G20 was a federally led event. After considering other sites, the federal government decided that the G20 summit would be in downtown Toronto. The city of Toronto was given very few months to come up with a security plan.

I just want to end by quoting the Canadian Civil Liberties Association: "What is needed is a comprehensive review that can examine the decisions and policies of all of the actors involved in the G20. The G20 was a federal summit, hosted by the federal government, policed by a federal security agency and paid for by federal funds."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm grateful to be up again to speak about Bill 34. First and foremost, we've spoken a few times and heard that they only had four months to get this together, but if they only had that amount of time and were incapable of doing the job, then they should have done the right thing and brought all of us involved and got us all connected, so we had the media involved so innocent people weren't affected by what happened that day.

I was at home with my husband and we were clicking through the TV channels; this was turned on, from the G20, and we were shocked. First of all, we thought to ourselves, "This is a Third World country that we're watching on TV right now," and then, within a few minutes, we realized that it wasn't a Third World country. This was right in downtown Toronto. I was never so saddened in my life at that exact moment. I remember sitting there thinking about it, how embarrassed I was to be a Canadian.

We all have five minutes of truth in the day, whether we ever want to admit it or not. The thing that we can say the most about the government is that their past behaviour is indicative of their future behaviour, and everything that they do up to this point clearly, for eight years, speaks volumes and what happened there with the G20.

At some point we need to do the right thing. When is it that they're going to be held accountable? And even when something catastrophic, people walking by—I know myself, with my children, if there is a fence we all assume, unless told otherwise, that you're not going to pass past that fence, but a five-metre perimeter is a lot of space. When you had no indication at all that there was a problem, to be an innocent bystander walking by, to be thrown into that situation would have been absolutely horrific. We owe it to do the right thing, with the government to give us all the facts and not hide behind them later on, whether it was federal or whatever it was.

I ask them the question: What is their responsibility in what happened then, if it wasn't that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thanks to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane in his thoughtful comments. He pointed out something that's really obvious; that is, that what was abridged on that fateful weekend were our fundamental human rights. They weren't abridged by the federal government—no doubt it was a mistake to hold it in downtown Toronto; they were abridged by the Liberal government, the government of Dalton McGuinty, by bringing in a secret regulation, 233/10, when the House was in session, behind closed doors in cabinet so that their own members in their own party didn't know about it, and invoking that. That's what set off the fundamental problems that we encountered over that weekend.

I was part of it. I saw it. I'm an eyewitness. I'm not going to blame the police on this one. Yes, there were problems in policing, but the police didn't get the instructions they needed from this government. It's this government. It was very nicely described or—let's put it this way: It was completely glossed over, the fact that, yes, Justice McMurtry and, yes, the Ombudsman slammed this government for their activities during that time. They didn't just say, "You need to get rid of this regulation." They slammed them for bringing it in, for acting on it and for acting in secret when the House was in session.

We in the New Democratic Party, yes, we're going to vote for it, but we've got some real problems with this bill, because sandwiched in with this bill is something else again that abridges civil liberties, and that is, keeping people away from courthouses unless they've got a good reason to be there. What? That has nothing to do with what happened at the G20. Nuclear facilities—although there may be some rationale behind this, and we'll find out in committee, does this mean that Greenpeace can't go and demonstrate outside a nuclear facility? I certainly hope not. But environmentalists, beware, because this bill might attack you and your human rights for freedom of assembly, freedom of movement in public spaces.

So please, civil rights folk, pay attention. Come to committee, be part of the debate, because it's not over yet. They haven't apologized. They haven't been held accountable.

1550

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm delighted to be able to stand up and speak to the bill. It actually reminds me of a very similar situation many years ago. I recall sitting in Archie Campbell's court—Judge Campbell has since passed away—and in that court he said, and I'm going to paraphrase a bit, "This is the most draconian law ever put in place, second to none, except maybe the War Measures Act federally." What he was actually talking about was Mike Harris's bill dealing with amalgamation of boards, really which was put in by the NDP government. So it's interesting to sit and listen to such heartfelt concern about this type of legislation that actually addresses a very serious problem that we have recognized.

As a former Minister of Energy, there is no question in my mind that you must have a secure nuclear facility. It would be absurd—it would be criminally insane—not to ensure that those facilities are protected, because in the event of an incident that was a terrorist incident, then it would fall on the government for not providing that type of protection. We've seen this around the world, and we're not immune because we happen to live in North America.

So what this bill is doing is addressing courthouses where people have been killed because there isn't sufficient protection, nuclear facilities that could in fact be up for a terrorist encounter and that need to be protected, and a review of an archaic piece of law.

I congratulate the minister for having the foresight to actually put them together, to bring them forward and to actually resolve to deal with the issue. But at the end of the day, you cannot stand on the other side of this House and say, "The federal government had nothing to do with it." It was their event, they poorly planned it, and they nicely have washed their hands of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane has two minutes to reply.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the members from Pickering–Scarborough East, York–Simcoe, Parkdale–High Park and Etobicoke Centre.

In my remarks, I never blamed the federal government or said it wasn't—I said that everyone made mistakes. I never blamed parties. I never complained that you only had four months to prepare. The thrust of my argument was that it only took one cabinet meeting to trample on the rights of Ontarians when the Legislature was sitting, and the thrust of my continuing remarks in the minute I have left is that hopefully we have learned, and that when this bill goes to committee and when other bills go to committee, we will always keep that as our paramount, you know—keep our blinders on, that utmost, in a democracy, we always have to think, because, yes, you know what? There are going to be times when the wrong person is in the wrong place. We can't prevent them all. But if we have to shut our society so tight that you have to go through a mini interrogation to enter a courtroom in Temiskaming Shores, then we're no longer in a democracy.

We have to have a balance, and we have to show, in committee, that this bill actually will provide it. No one wants to risk anyone's life, but we have to be sure that we provide a balance and that we maintain a democracy, as we are all very proud to participate in.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I really wasn't going to speak very long about this bill this afternoon. In fact, up until 10 minutes ago I wasn't going to speak at all on this bill, but here I am.

The reason it caught my interest, and I think the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore was bang on in terms of—you know, I was the Minister of Energy at 9/11. In fact, I was at a federal-provincial ministers' conference in Quebec City, at the Château Frontenac, with all of the energy ministers, including the federal energy minister from Canada, with the provinces and the territories. It just shows that you never really are prepared well enough for these things.

So I also take the position of the honourable member from the NDP who just spoke, that there is a lot of blame to go around for what happened. I guess what's most disturbing is that a regulation can actually be passed into law under an old bill that, really, no one knew anything about, can be kept secret for so long and not give fundamental rights to the people who expected all of us to uphold the law in this province. It's hard to uphold if you don't know it.

With that point made, on September 11, 2001—I can remember, Ralph Goodale was federal minister chairing the meeting, along with a Quebec counterpart co-chairing. Normally, we think we're the most important people in the room, energy ministers during a conference like that, but all of a sudden, all of the media left the room and were out in the hallway watching the TV monitors. We couldn't believe what we saw and what the whole world was witnessing, the planes going into towers. I immediately thanked my assistant deputy

minister with me for, by coincidence, just a month before that, having gone through the emergency plan for our nuclear plants in a series of briefings so that I would know what my role is. Judy Hubert was the assistant deputy minister—no longer with the public service, but an excellent and very, very sharp person, and she knew her role.

It wasn't until those security briefings the month before 9/11 that I had any idea that we didn't have any armed personnel at any of our nuclear plants. We didn't have any guns on site. We had actually very little security, and it hadn't been given a lot of thought because we generally lived in a peaceful society. We had security there, but it was mostly checking on making sure our employees didn't arrive stoned to work. I mean, they were basically checking cars and people's baggage and stuff like that. We were just sort of checking ourselves and not really looking out for terrorists.

I can see how governments get in a bit of a panic, because we immediately ordered armed guards. We got the local police to go to our plants, wherever they were, and stay there, even if it would cost us a million bucks a day in overtime—which it darn near did; no exaggeration. I had worked with the armed forces. I had been executive assistant to Perrin Beatty, the federal minister, so I knew some people in the armed forces. I immediately ordered anti-aircraft guns, if you can believe it—some of them are still around our plants—and made sure that our pronouncements to the public were that we were doing everything we could. So I know a little bit about this.

In this case, I think the government had time to plan. Perhaps the federal government was in part to blame for the security planning.

In my 21 years here, I don't remember too many Ombudsman reports that were as scathing as this one. It's called Caught in the Act. Now, the Ombudsman has a flare for naming these reports, but I think this catches it quite well: Caught in the Act, the 15-foot rule or the five-metre rule interpreted by the police under the Public Works Protection Act regulation that the government passed in secret, in cabinet, and didn't really tell anybody about it—astounded.

People at home may not remember that 1,100 people were arrested and 140 were charged. Only two were charged under the Public Works Protection Act, which we're talking about today. Most were charged under the Police Services Act.

I'll just read a bit about what the auditor said. The regulation was regulation 233/10. He said in his executive summary of Caught in the Act in December 2010: "Even had regulation 233/10 been valid, the government should have handled its passage better. Regulation 233/10 changed the rules of the game. It gave police powers that are unfamiliar in a free and democratic society. Steps should have been taken to ensure that the Toronto Police Service understood what they were getting. More importantly, the passage of the regulation should have been aggressively publicized, not disclosed only through obscure official information channels. Perversely, by changing the rules of the game without real notice, regulation 233/10 acted as a trap for the responsible—those who took the time to educate themselves about police powers before setting out to express legitimate political dissent."

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I think there was quite a bit of legitimate political dissent. There also was quite a bit of shenanigans and violence, violence against property and other people, and that can never be condoned by anyone in this House. But there were those who had come from all over the world and certainly all over Canada to express—I never really understand what they hate about the G20 but apparently there are many things they don't like about the G20, even though it's one of the best organizations, in my opinion, in the world. But I'm sure it's not without fault and the governments aren't without fault and everybody has the right, or should have the right in a free and democratic society, to express in a peaceful way and a legal way. But that's hard to do if you don't know what the laws are.

I think we were all shocked that, first of all, we had a war-measures-type act still on the books for the province—I certainly understand federal laws in that regard—and, secondly, that the cabinet could enact a regulation and not have to publicize it. You'd think it would be in your interests—and I say this to the minister, who's the minister now, but in the government's interests to actually widely publicize this, along with Police Chief Blair, so that you wouldn't have so many people clogging up your paddy wagons and your makeshift jails, which looked horrible, by the way, from an international standard. Anybody watching that on TV must have wondered what happened in the province of Ontario; the great, peaceful, welcoming province that we've been throughout our history, suddenly locking up 1,100 people and unable—with the best-trained police force in the world, bar none—to at least give the appearance that there was any peace, order and good government about to come. There were a few hours there where, if you were watching TV or if you were like us down here in Toronto during those days, it was just really scary, to put it bluntly.

I'd just give a bit more from what the Ombudsman said: "All of this makes for a sorry legacy. The value in hosting international summits is that it permits the host nation to primp and pose before the eyes of the world. Ordinarily Ontario and Canada could proudly showcase the majesty of a free and democratic society. The legacy of the passage and administration of regulation 233/10 is that we failed to do that well." He also goes on to give a history of the Public Works Protection Act.

In the minute I have left, Mr. Speaker, I would just say that the government is doing the right thing here. This bill is fairly narrow. It deals with nuclear plants; deals with courts, which need to make sure that they're free to do their work so that people have fair and just trials. I think it clarifies other things: Electricity generating stations will be protected. Obviously the backbone of anything we do in this day and age requires electricity to

keep your economy going, especially during times of crisis.

The fact of the matter is, though, the government really should apologize. It would be rather easy for you to do that. The honourable member of Etobicoke gets up and says, "Well, the federal government washes their hands of it." You know, you should do the right thing, and maybe the federal government would follow your lead if you did that.

There are a lot of people that were hurt. There are a lot of people that had their good reputations—because they were shown on TV sitting in a makeshift jail out in the middle of a parking lot. I mean, how would you like that for your son or daughter who might have strong views about wanting to protest something, almost, well, completely arbitrarily in many cases—obviously the courts felt that there was no reason for arrests—dragged across the media because they've been arrested, and tainted their reputations. You owe them a proper apology.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always engaging to listen to the member from Simcoe–Grey, as well as some of the other members that have stood up and spoken here.

It's interesting that some focus has been given here on nuclear facilities, and I raised the issue that Greenpeace and other environmentalists have been known to demonstrate outside these facilities. One of the very reasons they want to demonstrate is the danger of supplying 50% of our energy needs with nuclear. We've seen what can happen with a natural disaster in Japan. Well, here, this bill is obviously purporting that there may be a terrorist disaster involving nuclear energy. The bottom line is, it's not safe. That's why we're opposed to it in the NDP.

But to get back to this secret regulation 233/10, imposed secretly while the House was still in session, which led to the nightmare that was the G20 weekend in Toronto, yes, it was a mistake by the federal government to have it here, but it was an even bigger mistake by the provincial government to bring in this secret regulation while the House was sitting. I would even argue, Mr. Speaker, that there was a breach of members' privileges, because if you look at standing order 1(b), you'll see that proceedings are conducted, or should be, in a manner that respects the democratic rights of members. I, as a member, had my democratic rights abridged by the bringing in of a secret regulation by cabinet while the House was in session, never bringing it to the floor of this place. So there's another reason that this government is at fault, and another reason why this government should apologize.

It's a little late for a public inquiry now, where those cabinet members who made that call could actually be put on the stand—but at least an apology to the people of Toronto and the people of Ontario, because this is where it started. And it started with none of us knowing, even though we were here. That is a breach of privilege, I would warrant, Mr. Speaker. I'll say more later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to respond to the comments of the member from Simcoe–Grey, some of which I agreed with, obviously.

I think there is a sense of agreement around the House that it's time to move on, that we've seen something that we know needs some action from this House and it's time that we take that action. Some of the statements he made, I would take issue with, but that's the nature of this place.

I think you have to concentrate on the facts here. There was a G8 summit held in the province of Ontario; there was a G20 summit held in the province of Ontario. Some people at the time thought that the site that was picked for the G20 was not the correct site, that the time that was given for security planning around that site was not adequate. Nonetheless, the federal government decided that it was going to move on with this, and it got left in the hands of the Toronto police, police around the province of Ontario, the OPP, the provincial government and local government to deal with a decision that was made by the federal government. That's all fine and good.

Some people came out that day to peacefully protest, which is a right in the province of Ontario that I think all members of this House would support. There were people among the crowd who were there simply to cause mischief, to cause violence and to cause damage to property and perhaps even to people. So it seems to me that everybody had the best intent that day; the idea was to allow for peaceful protest, but also for public safety and for the protection of civil liberties. In hindsight now, we've had two reports that say that a better job could have been done and should have been done.

If we are to agree on that and move forward, what we need to do today is to pass this bill, to move this ahead, to make some of the changes that have been suggested. I'm imploring members of this House to support the bill that we have before us, to allow this to move forward and to allow us to do the right thing when it comes to the advice we've received from those who have studied this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to have the opportunity to make a few brief comments on the remarks that were made by my colleague the member from Simcoe–Grey on this issue. I think it was really interesting to hear some of his reflections on some of the situations he dealt with during his time as a cabinet minister. It's really relevant to some of the issues we're facing in the context of this debate today, because of course we in the government of the day dealt with September 11, 2001, and all the issues that were surrounding that. Now, that was a genuine crisis, and that called for action. It called for swift, immediate action in an emergency situation.

The situation that we're faced with here was something we knew was going to happen. We knew that we

were going to have the G20 in downtown Toronto, and so the decision that was made by this government to enact the secret G20 law is doubly bad, Mr. Speaker. First of all it was done, and probably never should have been done in the first place, because it was using an act that was really antiquated: the old Public Works Protection Act, which was enacted originally in 1939 on the eve of the Second World War and was meant to prohibit activities of Nazi saboteurs, clearly not relevant in the context of the G20 in Toronto in 2010.

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Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we have a situation where it was done secretly. It was done while this Legislature was sitting. There was no mention of anything being done. It was done in secret and then promulgated and nobody really knew what it was meant to be doing. That's why we saw a lot of the confusion that we saw during the course of the G20; the confusion about the boundary and the police powers of arrest during that time. All of this could have been avoided had we been able to have a debate on that and had the public been fully informed about what was going on, but of course none of that happened.

So of course we are going to support this legislation, Mr. Speaker, but I think it really is important to remember the context to make sure that this doesn't happen again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: First, I just want to thank the members from Simcoe–Grey, Parkdale–High Park, Oakville and Whitby–Oshawa for their comments on the bill that's being presented here today and debated, Bill 34.

The theme that's coming around the House today is blame. I'm hearing how "we're not to blame" or "they're to blame." But really, I think, in essence, why I'm here is to find solutions to the problems that were created by whatever level of government it was, but we actually need to know what our mistakes were before we can actually correct them. So that's why we need to look at what the turn of events was and where the gaps were that weren't looked after legally to protect the civil liberties of citizens.

The government does have a responsibility. I see that because they've brought this bill forward, they're taking that onus and saying, "Hey, there's something that needs to be changed." I think that's a step forward in saying that there was some onus on us to make sure that this situation didn't happen. So I commend them for bringing this bill forward and trying to correct an antiquated relic of a law that has put people's lives in disarray—traumatized.

I know some of the victims that—not personally, but the victims that were arrested and involved in that protest are still feeling the repercussions of what happened in the G20. A lot of them are still suffering medically—and mental anguish about what they had been put through. They weren't there to cause any trouble. They were there just to have a peaceful protest.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available for questions and comments. I now turn back to the member for Simcoe–Grey, who has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, thank you to the member for Parkdale–High Park and the members from Oakville, Whitby–Oshawa and London–Fanshawe.

I think the member from London–Fanshawe, as well as the honourable member from Parkdale–High Park, hit the nail on the head—London–Fanshawe just reminding us that really we shouldn't play the blame game but get to the bottom to make sure this doesn't happen.

That brings me to recommendation number three of the Ombudsman's report, where he says:

"The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services should develop a protocol that would call for public information campaigns when police powers are modified by subordinate legislation, particularly in protest situations."

"My third recommendation is intended to address the ministry's failure to ensure proper communication of a regulation that effectively increased police power."

We've heard all about the secrecy and how this was done, and we certainly know what the effect was: 1,100 arrests, very few convictions, a lot of innocent people caught, and the government literally, as the Ombudsman's report says, caught in the act.

So my question to the cabinet that is here: Didn't anybody in cabinet say, "What's our communications plan?" I was in cabinet for eight years, and often, before we discussed the substance, we would discuss how we were going to communicate whatever change we were bringing to the province. We always felt that was actually more important, frankly, and left it up to the lawyers to get the fine print right in the bill. But your job as a cabinet minister and a communicator and as a representative of the people would be to say to your Premier and others, "What's our communications plan? People are going to get caught in this, and all heck might break out," which is exactly what happened.

Again, you should apologize, and again, I'm going to be very interested to see how far the member for Parkdale–High Park gets with her breach of privilege, because I think she has a very good point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on second reading of Bill 34?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This afternoon I'll be talking about bill 34. This bill is going to bring changes forward to the Police Services Act in regards to court security and the new Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act.

This act comes about because of the events that occurred in the G20. Leaders from all over the world came to Toronto, and people from all over the world came to protest in a peaceful way. I'm sure most of them had that intent to come out that day. We've seen the terrible way people were treated during the G20, and over 1,100 people were arrested on that day.

This bill has been brought about because of citizen groups that raised issues around what happened and how this government responded to the events in 2010. People's charter rights and freedoms were violated. Everyone wondered how this could have happened right here in Canada, in Ontario, in Toronto. The Ombudsman, André Marin, talked about how when the Toronto police asked the ministry to sponsor special designation under the Public Works Protection Act, it was to help them do their job and to protect the security fence. Some people were rightly concerned about the optics of using wartime legislation, but still, the decision was made. It was decided not to publish and not to let the public know how this legislation could have affected their civil rights. They kept quiet, and instead, they quietly handed out over-exaggerated sweeping powers under a 71-year-old law that allows civil rights to be squashed.

André Marin said that it almost certainly would be illegal and unconstitutional under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to have this regulation enacted. As a result of this act, there were six separate reviews conducted into G20 security, but none of these reviews had the mandate or jurisdiction to ask questions that Ontarians wanted answers to. Our leader, Andrea Horwath, introduced a private member's bill in the House to have a G20 public inquiry, but sadly, this bill did not pass, so we still did not have answers that the people deserved. We still were left wondering about the decisions and the actions the McGuinty government and the police took during the G20. The public inquiry would also provide a better accounting of our tax dollars.

We ask ourselves, how could this have happened? Civil liberties were erased, and people were not informed. People had no idea what was happening. They were detained, asked for ID, asked questions and submitted to warrantless searches. The report showed that the government enacted the regulation that increased the powers of the police, but no one knew what was happening until people started getting arrested.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association asked the government of Ontario for an apology for the way it handled the G20 security, but an apology has not yet been received. That's been a bit of a back-and-forth today. I think the apology—and someone mentioned it; it was the member from Simcoe–Grey—is to the people who were affected by the enactment of this regulation. They truly are victims of a situation—and hindsight is 20/20—that never should have happened. There should have been more publicizing of what occurred.

1620

The ministry said that they could have done better in communicating. Then I ask: Why wasn't it put in the paper, in the news? Inform citizen groups. Even put signs up, at least giving people the knowledge so that when they went out to protest they knew what they were walking into. It was almost—and I'll use a comparison—setting a trap, and no one knew the trap was there. The government failed to publicize this, and here we are today again debating this very important issue of the fallout of the way this was handled.

Yes, the federal government also played a part. Yes, the provincial government also played a part. The police played a part. But again, I urge this House to look beyond the fault and work together to find solutions so that this will never happen again. It really is disgusting that civil liberties were trampled on and erased that day.

People like Adam Nobody, when police asked his name and he answered what his name was—"Adam"—and they asked him, "What's your last name?" and he said "Nobody": This is the irony of one of those civil liberties that were truly trampled. Here's a person who is giving them their name, and due to circumstances—I'm sure emotions were heightened with police and pedestrians and protesters and all involved. But this poor soul was actually giving his name, and I think the police thought he was mocking them. He certainly wasn't. That really touches my heart: that somebody, just because their name was not quite—it does sound like a joke. "What's your name?" "Adam Nobody." Anyway, that was a very unfortunate situation, when he did try to give his identity and it wasn't taken too literally, that it was him.

I think one of the other worst types of scenarios that happened to come out of civil liberties being squashed during that time was a gentleman—he was 57 years old. He was also an amputee, and he came down to participate and march in the labour rally. After the labour march, he was resting, and the police came up to him and asked him to get up, but of course, with having an amputee situation, he couldn't get up too quickly. Again, I'm sure emotions were high. Police dragged him—I'm not going to say "escorted," because it certainly wasn't that—into the police van.

Seeing those and hearing those things happen to ordinary people really disturbs me. It disturbs me, how that could have happened. So I'm glad to see that we are looking at this bill, G34, so that these things can't happen again. I compliment the government and the opposite members for all the debate, and I hope it continues in a considerable way, because if we don't have our shields down of the kind of office we hold, we're never going to truly listen to the opinions and suggestions of the other party. I think we're all here for the same purpose: It's to try to make this bill better. It's to make sure this won't ever happen again: history we do not want to repeat itself.

I thank you all for listening today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to thank my colleague from London–Fanshawe for speaking up on this issue. My thoughts and prayers are with your riding after that terrible riot that occurred on the weekend. I wish well to all the emergency workers that were injured, and innocent people.

I'd like to just make a few comments. Every year in my pharmacy, we've put up a display for Remembrance Day for the month of November, displaying those in my area that served in the wars: World War I, World War II,

Vietnam, Korea and recently the Gulf wars. And I think about this: I don't think the people went to war to fight for our freedoms to have a government working in secrecy to take away the freedoms they went to fight for. And I'm glad this bill has come up to remove it. I think it's time that we're open and transparent. For the government to be under closed doors and take our freedoms away, it just doesn't sit right with me.

When this did occur, I was not a sitting member of this Legislature. I was a pharmacist in St. Thomas, just living my days with my family and the citizens in my riding, and we never even thought from the start that the government would actually act and take our rights away without even consultation with sitting members who we've elected into this office.

The Speaker of the time was from my riding and had great support, and the fact that he wasn't able to voice the concerns, or his designate to voice the concerns, of how this government took away our rights, I think that's wrong.

If I can take my hat off as a politician for a time, as a resident, you owe me and every resident of Elgin–Middlesex–London an apology for doing what you did: taking away our rights without having the decency to bring it out and have an honest and open debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. We are debating Bill 34 this afternoon. Of course, it's my understanding that there were only two people who were arrested under the Public Works Protection Act. The minister responsible for community safety and corrections has provided me with this information—two people.

There's no question that this act was brought in in 1939. It's an act that should have been changed years ago. There were opportunities for the Drew administration to change it, the Frost administration to change it, the Robarts administration to change it, the Davis administration to change it, the Miller administration to change it, the Peterson administration to change it, the Rae administration to change it, and the Harris administration and the Eves administration, and now we're deciding to make the change now.

There's no question that this was a very archaic act that should have been changed long ago, and there's no question in my mind that the G20 summit should have never been held in downtown Toronto. I mean, if you want to take a look at poor planning, it's to have a summit in the heart of Canada's, North America's business district, downtown Toronto. There were lots of other opportunities. Former Mayor Miller, I believe, suggested that it be held out at the old Downsview air force base, or the CNE grounds—any place to get it out of downtown Toronto, which was an inappropriate location to hold it.

In terms of security, of course, we had the G20 leaders here, and I can imagine the howling that would have happened if there had have been any unfortunate incident occur to any of those G20 leaders. Everybody would have been coming back here and saying, "What was the government of the day doing that they didn't provide adequate security for all the G20 leaders?"

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments? The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am not shocked, because that has been a pattern here from the member from Peterborough during this debate on this bill.

I am shocked, though, that in this bill there are only five members of the government caucus, out of 52, who even spoke to this bill in debate other than these two-minute questions-and-comments sections—only five members, including the minister, who have even spoken to this bill.

But to the comment of the member from Peterborough talking about various administrations in this province—what a cop-out, going back to George Drew, for goodness' sakes. I guess the Hepburn ministry could have undone the fact that they did it, but the reality is that those successive administrations, from the Drew to the Eves ministry, did not implement that archaic—there are all kinds of archaic acts on the books of Ontario. Are you going through the book, dare I say to the member from Peterborough, and finding what other ones can be changed?

The reason you're changing this act is nothing about you people being proactive. It's the fact that you were caught in the act—not proactive. It's Caught in the Act, Speaker.

1630

For the member for Peterborough to stand up and try to imply that this is something that was being done because it should have been done sooner is just quite silly. It's quite silly, to be perfectly honest with you.

Look, what happened here is something that should never be repeated; that is, a government that took the people of Ontario for granted and failed to come to this Legislature and consult with the people who are duly elected to represent their constituents, wherever they come from in this province. That's the duty of the government. What did they do? They said, "Nay. We're not going to bother worrying about the people. We're just going to pass this behind closed doors." Shame on them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to commend the member from Peterborough on his knowledge of history and all those governments that didn't change the act. But it took the McGuinty government to abuse it.

The other thing that I believe I heard was that only two people were arrested under the act, and that's the problem. Eleven hundred people were detained. If it had been used correctly—we've got no problem with arresting people who break the law when you know what the law is. I've got no problem paying a speeding ticket if I know what the speed limit is. But if the speed limit is

changed and no one tells me, that's a different story. And this is much more serious.

I wish that the members opposite, especially the member from Peterborough, would be a little less partisan and actually try—there are some of us on this side of the House who are trying not to be partisan, and we keep getting partisan stuff thrown back at us. We, especially the newer members in this House, are really trying to understand what happened, and we're all hoping to help for it not to happen again.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Those who were there before you should have told the truth.

Mr. John Vanthof: From what I am understanding, some of those who were here before weren't told exactly what was happening either.

So, you know, let's all work together and try not to—I won't be partisan if you're not. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I now return to the member for London–Fanshawe, who has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate all the comments and debate that have happened over Bill 34. I certainly will be supporting it, and I hope that when it goes to committee, there will be extensive work done on it.

Every part of this bill should be looked at and dissected until you can't stand it anymore: the security fence issue; the perimeter issue; searching someone who drops you off at the courthouse, and their car; your having to show ID; the reason they're going to ask you questions; what kind of questions are going to be asked to assess whether or not you're some kind of security breach.

Those things need to really be looked at in detail, because the sentiment around the House is that when we're looking at civil rights, it affects every single person. Sometimes there are bills that pass in the House that don't affect everyone, but this one does. It affects every one of us, even when we're out in the public.

I know there was a member opposite who said he went to the G20 and was at Queen's Park and a security guard kind of warned him what was happening, and so he didn't actually go to the protest. This is why civil liberties are so important—it affects everyone.

That particular member was actually educated to make a choice. When we're not educated to make a choice and what is at stake is our civil liberties—I certainly wouldn't want to be in a situation where I didn't know what I did wrong or what I could have done to get out of that situation, and be detained or arrested or questioned just for being somewhere where I didn't know that I couldn't stand too close to a fence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for further debate, I'd like to remind members of the House that it's inappropriate to make use of props during debate.

Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to rise today and to speak on An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2012.

As members of this House have been made aware, this legislation is not just in response to the antiquated public works act from 1939, but more importantly, it is in response to the shameful and disgraceful fallout from the G20 summit held in 2010 that happened under the Liberal government's watch after it passed secret, sweeping police powers.

The Liberal government had ample time to look ahead and openly recommend and work with this House to find ways to amend for consideration by this House and ensure that this would not take place. As some of you may remember, the Ombudsman uncovered a June 7 email that proved beyond a doubt that this government had a premeditated plan to cover up the secret law—the email from the minister's office which said, "...everyone was on board with drawing out the actual release of that knowledge to the public for as long as what is reasonable.... So long as we can stress as best we can that this should be kept under wraps...." Shameful, Speaker.

On that note, I wish to add that I am in support of expanding the Ombudsman's mandate, to provide trusted, independent investigations of complaints against hospitals, long-term-care homes, school boards, children's aid societies, police, retirement homes and universities. Our provincial Ombudsman is the only one in Canada that does not have this expanded mandate. Just last year alone, the Ombudsman's office handled 15,000 cases of complaint against the government—hard to imagine in the province of Ontario. Apart from the G20 report, Caught in the Act, as provided by our colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Mr. Marin has exposed the LHINs, shoddy private colleges, the culture of theft and fraud at the OLG etc., etc., etc. I think Mr. Marin has so far done a tremendous service in investigating and uncovering this government's lack of openness, transparency and accountability. Accountability and transparency is fundamental to good governance, and I support it fully.

There's a lot to be said about the clandestine ways of this current government: decisions and legislation all enacted behind closed doors, under the cloak of secrecy. In the case of the review of Bill 34, it is once again too little, too late. They mismanaged this file. They missed the boat on this one and now they are trying to react, rather than being proactive and looking ahead. It sounds a bit like the Green Energy Act: We're going to bull through, we're going to put legislation in place, we're not going to listen, and now we're going to try to somewhat—I hope, in this case, with the Green Energy Act, they actually may come to this House and actually backtrack a little bit and do the honourable thing, do the right thing.

I trust you can see, Mr. Speaker, the similarities in these two examples of poor leadership. In the G20 fiasco,

the Liberals unilaterally made a decision—a decision, I would suggest, that was a significant overreaction, compared to the original intent, that being a time of war. I don't believe someone like the gentleman referenced earlier, with a prosthesis on his leg, was a criminal of war trying to do harm to our province or our country. It's an overreaction. It was a significant intrusion of people's rights and, in my opinion, is a blight on Ontario's proud heritage and history.

In the case of the Green Energy Act, the Liberals, unilaterally again, removed the democratic right of the duly elected officials to make decisions related to wind turbines in their respective communities—again, an intrusion on people's rights, and complete disregard and disrespect for democracy.

The Liberals are a government acting as a ruler, not as a servant or agent of its citizens. Just a few months ago, this government moved swiftly and quietly to close two jails in Bruce and Grey counties, one in Owen Sound and another in Walkerton. And just earlier this month, it shut down the youth detention centre in Goderich without any forewarning. The people there had no idea this action was coming. In all three instances, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services—and, I say respectfully, in her poor judgment—not once consulted or toured the provincial facilities before pulling the plug, and left constituents in the dark, 300 of whom lost jobs as a result of this ill-conceived decision.

I should, with all due respect again to the minister, state that I still await facts and figures that support the supposedly good decision. There are no numbers, there are no savings, and I will continue to press this House and the minister to provide those facts to the people of my good constituency of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. And just as this government had done with the secret G20 law, it did with the closure of these three provincial correctional facilities in Bruce and Grey. It gave no thought to the impact on the citizens, no consideration to the need for law.

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In the G20 case, we watched in disgust and disbelief the government-sanctioned mass arrest of 1,000 to 1,100 people during the G20 weekend, who were later herded into makeshift detention centres throughout the city, as my colleague Mr. Wilson stated, with only two people actually charged. What's wrong with that in a democratic society like ours? So we have legitimate concerns, Speaker, today, having seen this government single-handedly authorize the largest mass arrest in our country's history, an affront on our civil liberty. A good government does not initiate force against its citizens, who had broken no laws or created any act to do so. Walking up to view an event is not a crime, to the best of my knowledge, in Ontario. However, the government opposite certainly found it that way in 2010.

A proper government is one that is open, transparent and accountable to its people. A proper government will apologize when it makes a poor mistake, a poor decision, a wrong decision. It is the honourable thing to do, Mr. Speaker; it is the right thing to do. Yes, we have a duty to protect public infrastructure, power plants, dams, bridges and other critical infrastructure from sabotage; and court security, allowing peace officers to request identification from and search a person if they do have a valid reason to suspect that there may be something, or their vehicle or property entering such court premises; and the security of power-generating facilities. But more importantly, we have a duty to protect our citizens, to ensure that democracy is not compromised and our civil liberties are respected and upheld. They have a duty—we have a duty—to protect members of the public and our dedicated staff members alike, to provide safe working environments.

Bruce Power nuclear station, located in my neighbouring riding of Huron–Bruce in Tiverton, Ontario, has an excellent security response team and, in fact, has an international award for their consecutive years for the service they provide to protect those facilities, to protect the people of Ontario. It's something to be honoured and admired, and we offer kudos to them. We need proper security at facilities such as our nuclear plants, our courts and our electric generating facilities. We need, however, to be careful to strike a balance. We cannot, as has been the case of many interactions lately under this Liberal government, overregulate and create bureaucracies. I think of our small rural abattoirs, many of whom have been put out of business due to excessive regulation and overreaction to something that could be managed in a much more proficient and effective manner.

Similarly, we must always take adequate measures to protect our court, electrical generating facilities and our nuclear facilities, our staff and members of the public. However, like all such matters, we must do so with balance, and most importantly, we must do this with the utmost respect and adherence to the faith and power placed in us by the citizens who have sent us here.

I will be voting in support of the proposed legislation, as my colleagues from north Quinte West so eloquently put, to ensure that governments in future will not be able to inappropriately abuse their powers and thus bring shame to our great province and country.

As the member from Peterborough graciously pointed out, a number—a multitude—of other government administrations never went so far as to enact this act. It was intended for a war measure, for something that was of absolute critical importance to our people. This wasn't something about people coming up to a fence and wanting to good-naturedly look in and actually find out what's going on in their province. So thank you for pointing that out, member from Peterborough. It's great to know that you're the only government to abuse that power in many, many generations.

It simply is a case again, if you've done something wrong—many members of the NDP and our caucus have stood up today and said that we've all been taught the principle that if you do something wrong, you stand up, you admit it, and you apologize to those who you serve. Will you do the right thing? Will you not finally step up?

This is once again a reactive measure. After you've made a mistake, we have to go through all this pain and excessive drudgery, not to mention the waste of resources, to peel back again the orange and uncover yet another boondoggle in our province's proud history.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Mr. McMurtry for reviewing the PWP Act, and close with the following: If ours is to be a true democracy, then this government has to be controlled; its actions have to be strictly defined and circumscribed. We have to respect democracy and our civil liberties. Thank you so much.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll ask the government members to come to order, please.

Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to stand up after the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to say a few words.

I was there every single day during the G20. On the Saturday, I was there with several hundred Tibetans who were protesting the oppression they experienced in their home country of Tibet by a totalitarian regime of China, and here they were met with that same kind of response in Toronto.

On the Sunday, I went down with other Christian clergy leaders across denominations, and we decided we would have a service outside just to try to bring the level of confrontation down. So we went down to King Street and we led a prayer service there. King Street, as far as we knew, was a public street; it was our street. We had every right to be on King Street. There was no meeting happening, as far as we knew, anywhere near King Street, and yet the riot squad came and kept pushing us back, pushing us back, pushing us back. It was genuinely terrifying. These were religious leaders.

Again, all of this set in motion by this secret regulation, in secret, by a cabinet, secretly, while the House was in session and, as I've said, absolutely slamming any notion of democratic privilege of the members on this side of the aisle: That's what we're objecting to here, and that's what this bill is meant to change.

We're going to support it, but it has problems. I've outlined those problems. I don't see what courthouses and nuclear facilities really have to do with regulation 233/10, and I don't see why we should be checking for and, again, constraining civil liberties for those who just want to walk into a courthouse or be in a car in a courthouse parking lot.

One Iraq war vet whom I talked to when, again, I was met with the unleashing of the—paramilitary is the only way I can describe it—forces in my own riding said he'd never seen such poor policing put in place by such a poor move on government's side. He was an Iraq war vet trained by the marines.

I'll say more, Mr. Speaker, but not yet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We continue with questions and comments, and I recognize the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I think it's always good to return to the facts, because those facts are the important thing. The facts are that this event—the G8, the G20, whatever part of it you want to refer to—was a federal event, coordinated by the federal government, managed by the Prime Minister's office and overseen by the Metro Toronto police force. The Harper Conservatives gave Huntsville two full years to prepare for it; Toronto, just four months to come up with a proper plan.

It's gratifying to see that the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP will vote for it, and I suppose one of the prices of democracy is that you allow people to say, "I'm going to vote for this thing; I just intend to slam it during the debate." C'est la vie. That's the beauty of our system. That's why we're all here.

So, let us focus, then, on: What exactly was this power? What power did the police have? Now, what this act gave police is the power to do the following—just three things: Thing number one, to ask people: Who are you? Thing number two, to ask people: Where are you going? And thing number three, to ask people: What are you carrying?

It had a very narrow set of purposes. It was aimed at people who were residents of the area, if they were inside whatever the police chose to define the area; if they were business owners; if they were business people or shoppers or visitors or suppliers. All it was intended to do was to constrain the troublemakers outside but to allow anybody that had legitimate, fair business to come inside. That's all it was intended to do, and those are the only regulations that Ontario passed: To allow police to say, "Who are you, where are you going, and what are you carrying?"

That is what this is all about. I hope members support this.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We continue with questions and comments. I recognize the member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to take this opportunity to address Bill 34. I've spoken to this bill just briefly, but would like to reiterate, obviously, a few points.

It's clear that the illegal G20 law this government implemented, using wartime measures contained in the Public Works Protection Act, could have led to even more abuses than those that were witnessed on the streets of Toronto nearly two years ago. And that's what I'd like to address first: Why was this law so secret?

I remind the members present that this government invoked regulation 233/10 behind the closed doors of cabinet while this Legislature was, in fact, sitting. There was no emergency, no imminent threat and, more important, no reason to bypass the duly elected representatives here in this House. But that's exactly what this government did: It passed a secret law that greatly restricted civil liberties and then conspired to keep the details from the public. In fact, the Ombudsman called it a "premeditated, conscious ... decision not to announce the existence of the regulation."

This deliberate move to bypass the Legislature and public scrutiny created widespread confusion leading up to and during the G20 summit. People simply didn't know where the special powers of arrest were in effect. It wasn't until the G20 summit had ended that this government publicly acknowledged that the police did not have special powers to detain protesters within the area designated a public work under the regulation.

So I have to ask: If the police never did have any of these powers, why not be honest and tell Ontarians that in the first place? I think it's clear from the report that this government deliberately hid the details of this regulation from the public; no doubt about that.

Speaker, Ontarians want to believe their political representatives will be open, transparent and clear with them about matters that directly affect their rights. They don't want to read in a scathing report that the government has greatly infringed on those rights.

I will be voting in favour of this, but wanted to put my thoughts on record.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment. I turn to the member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you very much, Speaker. You're doing a great job today, by the way. I was very impressed with what your—

Interjection.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yeah. Maybe that's your next profession-in-waiting, there.

I want to address—

Interjections.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Well, when I generally give you a compliment, it's the truth.

I want to talk about the couple of differences between the two acts, so if I could have your attention. One of the things that we're doing with this act is: You can enter a courthouse, and any person entering a courthouse or inside a courthouse is required to produce identification and information to assess their security risk. A search without a warrant: any person, property or vehicle entering or attempting to enter the premises where court proceedings are conducted. Now, if we compare that to the nuclear and electricity generating facilities: search, upon consent, any person, property or vehicle entering the premises.

The other part I like about that one is that, unlike the PWPA, this act covers very limited categories of infrastructure, and prescribing the additional categories of infrastructure would require amendments to the act. It would require legislation, not regulation, and therefore has to be made public and debated. So I like the part in this one where, in regards to electricity and nuclear facilities, there must be consent and public debate.

When this goes to committee, I hope that there's going to be an opportunity to make changes to the courthouse security proceedings; that when people enter that security house, they have the opportunity to consent to this type of requirement before entering the courthouse.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I believe that concludes the time for questions and comments, so we return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, who has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really, truly hope that we can bring this bill to a committee to have full-party discussion, debate and ensure that we do the right thing and move forward for the benefit of the people of Ontario. There's too much rhetoric in this House about, "We want to listen. We want to reach out. We want a partner." I don't see a lot of that at this point. One of my colleagues in the NDP, from the north, I believe, stated that he wants to see as well that we want to work together, that we want to do the right thing.

This bill certainly should be reviewed. It was designed for war measures. The G20 summit was nothing even in complexity to that. So they invoked it, they moved forward without any discussion. They could have actually reached across the hall and said, "We'd like some help. It's in four months; we need your help. We need the collective wisdom of all the people of Ontario." But they chose not to do that; they chose to do it in secret. It sounds a bit like the budget: We're not going to have any input to that, and all of a sudden we're going to get to read a document. And they're going to put us on the defensive, because they know what's right and we don't. They will not listen. We are here to open our arms. Openly ask us, and we'll be happy to help you.

Mr. Speaker, they had four months. In fact, they had a whole bunch of years, not just four months. They saw this coming. Everybody knows that the G8 and the G20 were coming to our country and to our province. So they could have been proactive; they could have looked ahead. They disregarded civil liberties. They approached people on the main street as if they were common criminals, like in a Third World country—if they keep doing the financial things in this province that they are, we are going to be a Third World country. But I digress.

It's unacceptable that they abuse their power, that they used that discretionary abuse to invoke something like that. And I have to stand here and again state to the member from Peterborough: You're the only government that abused this power in all the years since wartime. Shame on you. We need to accept responsibility. Almost to a person on this side of the House, everyone has spoken about accountability, democracy, standing up and doing the right thing, admitting a mistake and making an apology on behalf of and to the people of Ontario.

Speaker, I ask them to do that. I will be supporting this bill with my colleagues, and we'll do it with true due diligence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for York–Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to add a few comments to the debate this afternoon. I think that one of the things we need to look at is perhaps the fact that the bill we're looking at is an update of a 1939 bill, but it allows us to step back a moment and look at what are the important

issues that are being dealt with in this bill. I think that one of the paramount issues to consider is the importance of fundamental freedoms. Too often, we use the term that we have freedoms very loosely, and we don't always think in terms of the kind of challenge our forefathers put into making sure we had such fundamental freedoms as the right to assembly and association and the right to freedom of speech.

In fact, in my office I have a copy of the Magna Carta, because I always think it's really important for people to understand something of the roots we have come from and the important elements we too often take for granted in our society today. What it boils down to, then, is the establishment of a balance between personal freedom and public protection. I think, sometimes, that the most effective measure for explaining personal freedom and public protection is to imagine that you have the right to swing your arm as long as it doesn't touch the person beside you. The G20 gave us an example of the complexities of providing that balance between personal freedom and public protection.

The public protection the government had at its disposal at this time was the Public Works Protection Act of 1939. The question of public protection began to assume a greater and greater importance as the G20 date moved closer and closer to Ontario. As a result of that, there were regulations that were passed. But the regulations were confusing, they were made in secret and they were used to pass a regulation giving the police broad powers of arrest. There are fundamental issues that were missing in this process.

Obviously, one of them—the most important, I would argue—was the transparency and the need for a public process. You don't give people broad powers in secret.

1700

At the same time as these regulations that were done in secret and did give broad powers of arrest—and I'll go back to what I said earlier, the balance between personal freedom and public protection. We could also see that there were masked, organized individuals who seeded themselves amongst those who were peacefully demonstrating. We all watched as overturned vehicles were set on fire. We saw the confusion of the police response. On the one hand, they let the fire continue; on the other hand, there were mass arrests made.

It seems to me, as we look at this particular piece of legislation today, the litmus test of it has to be on the question of the transparency, on openness, and as well on giving police the tools they need to deal with those who obviously had vandalism as their objective, not the freedom of assembly and association.

It's interesting, because I look back to that time to two examples that came to my attention personally and I think explain the difficulty of the creation of this balance I've spoken about.

I was on a phone-in program with other members of the Legislature. One of the comments that we had—and this was just before the G20—was on the need for planning, to have the appropriate amount of security in place for the G20. We had a caller call in and make reference to her right to protest. All three of us commented on this comment, because protest is a little different than the right to assembly and association. So we had a conversation about the fact that there are very few countries in the world where this kind of activity was lawful, but there was onus and responsibility on the person to, in fact, be obeying the law in terms of the recognition of the freedom of speech, for instance, and her right to be able to demonstrate.

The second one came from an individual whom I met who proudly told me that his son was an anarchist and he was going to be coming to the G20. I have no idea who he is or what he did—but just the idea that his father was quite proud of the fact that this was his goal as a person showing up for the G20.

When I look at what I consider to be the shortcomings of the action that the government took at the time and the fact that the Ombudsman was able, in his document, to talk about "caught in the act," I think that, obviously, there were shortcomings on the part of the government, but I also think that we have to reflect on how important it is that we all need to be vigilant. Democracy is a very fragile item. It is something that sometimes gets used—verbally, anyway—in the wrong context. I think that being an anarchist and the right to protest have to be balanced with, first, the issues of personal freedom and public protection.

I will be supporting the bill, but I think that we have to look at it and recognize the opportunities that it will provide in the committee hearings for the discussion and the update for restating that balance, that very, very important balance that any democracy must hold as an important value of personal freedom and public protection.

Those are the issues that I think are at the central point of any kind of legislation that deals with these issues. And I think, by the examples I have given you, that you can see it is fragile, that it is subject to possible attacks and that it behooves all of us, not only as members of this chamber in the legislative process but also recognizing that good citizenship also means that you respect and take responsibility for your community. It's when all of us do that that we can share in those rights that people have fought so hard for us to be able to enjoy today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the comments of the member from York–Simcoe, but I'd like to take the opportunity to talk a little bit about what my friend from Mississauga–Streetsville had to say.

You know, we in the New Democratic Party are not slamming the bill. We're critiquing the bill, some of us—supportive but critiquing—which is our role. What we are slamming is the government, particularly the cabinet and their actions, which is, by the way, exactly what Justice McMurtry and the Ombudsman did. It's exactly what they did in their reports. They critiqued—slammed, I would say, is not too strong a word—the actions of the government.

He says, "What's so wrong about asking somebody what your name is and to show identification?" Well, excuse me. I would warrant that if somebody asked him, as he left this building, to show identification, and what his name was and what his purpose is in being here, he would also experience his civil rights being abridged.

That's what we're talking about, and that was going on on a mass scale: 1,100 people detained; only two arrests made. I mean, this is the kind of actions you see in totalitarian regimes. This is what was happening in Toronto, and this was all set in motion provincially—yes, the federal government shares some of the blame—by this regulation 233/10, which was really written for wartime conditions. We were not in wartime here; we were having a meeting.

People from my riding—Liberals, Conservatives, New Democrats—spoke to me. They all were shocked and appalled by what went on, also in my own riding. I experienced it first-hand, being one of the peaceful protesters.

So that demands something. It demanded an inquiry—we sought a public one—where those members of cabinet who made that decision behind closed doors would be called to account. But yes, it also requires an apology, and this is our chance to ask for it. That's what we in the opposition are doing. Just say you're sorry when you make a mistake. Just say you're sorry when you trample on civil rights. Just say you're sorry when you put in secret regulations secretly when the House is in session and abridge our privileges. Just say that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you again, Speaker. Before I respond to the comments of my colleague from York–Simcoe, I would like to take a brief moment and introduce, in the members' east gallery, my lovely spouse, Andrea Seepersaud, and my constituency office manager, Magnolia Ma. I hope you'll welcome them to the assembly.

I thank the member for her comments. It's actually nice to see some of the purple rhetoric get stripped out of it—let's talk about what this actually is. My colleague from Parkdale–High Park says she's not here to criticize the act; she's here to slam the government. Go for it. Have fun. That is indeed why we were all elected.

So let's, in that spirit, quote directly from the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and what they've said about the federal responsibility for the G20: "What is needed is a comprehensive review that can examine the decisions and policies of all of the actors involved in the G20. The G20 was a federal summit, hosted by the federal government, policed by a federal security agency and paid for by federal funds. The federal government is therefore best suited to coordinate such an inquiry," and I couldn't possibly agree more.

1710

I reiterate what I said a few moments ago, that when we were asked, as a provincial government, to lend assistance to the Metro Toronto police, we said the minimum that you need when people propose to cross a line and go into an area that you may say is a restricted area is the flexibility to say to people, "Who are you, where are you going and what are you carrying?", such that the people who are going into the area are indeed legitimate visitors, business people, suppliers and so on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a pleasure to get up and comment on my colleague from York–Simcoe.

It's interesting to hear the member opposite talk about this being a federal responsibility, a federal conference when they saw the need to make this act in such secrecy. Sure, what he was talking about as far as the right to ask for some of these credentials, there's nothing wrong with that. But if there's nothing wrong with it, why was this legislation so purposely held back from the public, so that they knew what they were dealing with when it came up? It's another example of this government being first in an act that really hasn't happened since the Second World War, and there's been no need to change this legislation up until now. But we see a common practice of this government, which makes a bad decision, then tries to deceive the public and hide the information until after an election, and then after getting caught they call an inquiry and then they blame it on somebody else. It's time that we take responsibility.

This morning, we heard of another case where a letter went to the minister of the day talking about how there was a second set of books being kept in one of their ministries. No action. Everything's held up until the end of September. With the election just days away, they respond to it so it's the letter being received after the election. Of course, now they're trying to fight the inquiry, which is the general practice.

I guess what we want to see is an open government. We talk about some of the people calling into an open-line show. Democracies are not easy. There are a lot of hard decisions, and that's why there are so few of them in the world. We're privileged to have what's considered the best democracy in the world, but it's going to take some tough action and following some tough rules. That's all we're asking. These are basic fundamental rights. It's the rights and the demands of the people to stand up for their rights, or they'll soon disappear.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Time for one last question or comment.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's my pleasure to get one more shot at this. I'd like to thank the member from York–Simcoe for her comments—they were really thoughtful—about how democracy is a fragile thing and one of the most important things in democracy is balance: the balance between personal freedom and public protection. I really thought that was very well thought out, and it's very true.

I'd like to contrast that with the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, who said, "Well, it was only three little things in that act that were the problem." Well, if that's the case, then it should have been discussed here,

right? Either it's really important and it has to be done in secret for the safety of the province and the safety of the country, or it's just three little things and we just whip it through the Legislature. Pick your poison.

I think, really, we hear sometimes that some things aren't partisan. I really don't think—and maybe I haven't been here long enough. Some things get really partisan, but I don't think personal freedoms are something that should be partisan. I really don't think so. I really think that, on this side of the House, specifically in this corner, we are really going to try—and probably on the whole side. Probably on both sides. When it really comes down to brass tacks, we're going to try and make sure—and not just in this bill, but in a lot of the legislation—that we don't have to get into this he-said-she-said because we are talking about people's personal freedoms, and that's something that should be taken non-partisan, and very seriously in a democracy.

I'm very proud to be able to speak, and that's part of being a democracy, where a farmer from northern Ontario can actually say something like this without fear of retribution. That's something that's really important, and sometimes we forget it, but it's a great thing to be able to speak in this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I now return to the member for York–Simcoe, who has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you very much, and thank you to the members for Parkdale–High Park, Mississauga–Streetsville, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and Timiskaming–Cochrane. I appreciate the comments that have been made.

There are a couple of things that I think really stand out in terms of the tone and the interest of the speakers. I think two things: certainly, the member for Parkdale–High Park and the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, who are obviously not so much in agreement, but are on the same topic in terms of looking at the actions of government. And I think the question of the actions of government are very often things that get spun rather than actually demonstrated and quoted and observed in a less partisan way, because of the fact that they—it is important to be able to look at those actions of government and be able to enjoy the kind of transparency that we consider so important.

The question the member raised from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry about the difficulty of transparency—I would agree. Just because it's difficult doesn't make it impossible or doesn't make it something that you can't do, because you can certainly find reasons why something isn't going to be or shouldn't be transparent. You should always be able to understand why it should be transparent.

Finally, to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, I would agree with him. Freedom of speech, to be able to stand here in this chamber, when you think it's the 40th Parliament—for 200 years, approximately, people have been able to do this. We are indeed lucky.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. It's a beautiful day outside, and we should open up the roof and let the sun in.

I'm pleased to rise and speak to the Legislature today on Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2012.

I appreciate this bill being brought forward because it makes Ontario mindful that we must never take our freedom and personal liberty for granted. This bill helps to rectify a regulatory loophole that only serves to unnecessarily infringe on our rights.

I know everyone here has their own reasons for entering politics. We all come from different backgrounds—from business, law, medicine, nuclear facilities, volunteerism and everything else—and we all bring our unique perspective to this Legislature. The diversity of opinion is what makes this place an example of democracy, and it is envied around the world. But despite our differences, whether in opinion, background or motivations for entering politics, I know I can say with confidence that we all share an abiding belief in and commitment to the principles of freedom and the rule of law.

It was these principles that were infringed on during the G20 conference. In a widely covered frenzy, protesters were rounded up and arrested promptly and largely without a reasonable reason. It was unclear what authority police officers possessed, and as a result, many people did not warrant arrest and were unduly rounded up with everybody else.

Watching what can only be described as chaos on the news, I couldn't believe this was happening in Toronto. I figured I must have been watching coverage from some far-off country that did not have the sophisticated institutions of democracy that we pride ourselves on here in Canada.

The whole experience of watching events unfold on TV and the ensuing aftermath made me realize how often we take our democracy for granted. While we have one of the most advanced democracies in the world, something as seemingly insignificant and esoteric as a clause in an old piece of legislation can have the ability to shake our faith in the institutions of government that are there to protect our freedoms. So we must always be vigilant in our pursuit of ensuring freedom for all and the rule of law.

1720

To that end, we need to make sure the government is transparent, because ultimately the whole uproar over the use of police force during the G20 revolved around the lack of clarity over the police authority. The Public Works Protection Act gives incredible discretion to the minister of public safety and correctional services to use wartime powers for the protection of public works. As

we saw at the G20, the government was able to invoke regulation 233/10 to designate the site of the summit as a public work. This granted special powers to police to arrest anyone within five metres on either side of the security fence in the G20 zone. This in itself appears to be a frightening use of executive power. However, I am a realist and do understand that in proper circumstances the use of such a tactic can provide protection from a credible threat. It is important, though, that such a measure is not abused. It should also be a measure of last resort. No politician in this country should find the use of this tactic comfortable or easy. As a responsible politician, one should be deeply conflicted by its use, because such inner conflict is an affirmation of one's commitment to the values of freedom and democracy we consider self-evident.

Also, given the constitutional weight of invoking this clause, a responsible politician has a duty to clearly articulate the intention of using such a measure, as well as the authority it gives to police officers. This is where I take great exception to how this Liberal government made use of this legislative tactic. In the lead-up to the G20, there's no question emotions were high and people were increasingly on edge. When a mass of people all converge on one location for the purpose of protest, it is easy for this emotion to stir the pot and cultivate mass confusion. It is only natural for those protesters to be concerned about what special rights and methods of force the police officers have been granted to deal with the mass of people.

However, despite these inherent risks, McGuinty and his cabinet met behind closed doors and invoked regulation 233/10. They notified the police of their newly granted special powers, but neglected to notify the public of what these special powers entailed. It was only after the summit that the public was made aware of the powers granted the police officers. By invoking regulation 233/10 behind closed doors, with no communication to the public of its specifics, I am of the opinion that Dalton McGuinty shirked his duty to the people of Ontario. We all witnessed the results. Chaos ensued in the streets of Toronto. In the midst of all this, McGuinty remained behind a cloud of secrecy.

I can understand, in making his decision public—invoking wartime powers to deter credible threats is a tough pill to swallow. You'll no doubt face waves of criticism regardless of whether the action is a prudent one or not, and I said before that no politician worth his or her salt should make the decision lightly. But I would like to see the Premier take some responsibility for the tough decisions he makes. Sitting behind his closed doors and making decisions that he hopes nobody will notice is not the right way to serve the Ontario people. It exemplifies an individual who is not concerned with acting in the best interests of Ontarians. It exemplifies an individual more concerned with playing politics and avoiding criticism. Governing with the goal to avoid political unpopularity is no way to run a government and completely irresponsible. Unfortunately, this is part of the pattern of the government making unilateral decisions with no oversight, while minimizing rightful criticism.

With the G20, the Premier invoked regulation 233/10 but did not inform the public of its specifics until after the summit. It was like he was hoping to shirk his responsibility by telling people after the summit that the measure he enacted only gave special powers within five metres of the G20 fence.

Mr. Speaker, I believe in partnership, and partnership is very important. We have a partnership with the people of Ontario to run this province with fair, open transparency. We have a Liberal government that tested this partnership during the G20 episode, and now again we see them today testing another successful partnership, a successful partnership that enables an industry to employ 60,000 people while also raising over $1 billion a year for the government to spend on education and health care. They decided to end this partnership without consultation. I'm talking about the horse racing industry, Speaker. It has been a great partner for the OLG for the last 10 years and has provided billions and billions of dollars to help fund health care and education, yet, at the complete will of the Minister of Finance, he has ended that agreement. Of course, the way this proposal was sold to the public was that the Liberals were in favour of supporting health and education, not wealthy horse owners.

I don't think the minister really believes that the majority of horse racers are wealthy individuals just looking for a free ride. I think he knows, like me, that most families involved in horse racing are hard-working individuals that must supplement their horse racing income by other means. Why do they do it? Because horse racing has a rich, rural history. Many people gave their livelihoods, tied to the industry. And while they don't make millions, their passion for the industry is rooted in a way of life that I don't expect most members from Toronto to understand.

But here we come to the crux of the issue: The Liberals, who lost a number of rural ridings this past election, simply do not care about rural Ontario. They're more interested in being popular in Toronto, and to that end, they don't care if a decision negatively affects rural Ontario. This is not a government that is interested in governing for Ontario; this is a government interested in winning the next election.

They don't like hearing criticism because if they actually were open and transparent, they would have consulted with stakeholders in the horse racing industry to get their take on the government's proposal. Had they done that, the stakeholders would have told them it was a bad idea, which it is. But had the government held consultations with the industry, I know from my talks from those same stakeholders that they would have found an amicable and flexible partner that would have been more than happy to work with the government to help with OLG's strategic realignment. They could have engaged this industry that, through the slots-at-raceways program, generates 33% of OLG's total revenue. Had

they just invited the industry to the table, they would have found out ways to leverage this existing partnership to generate even more money for education and health care.

But to the Liberals, none of this really matters. They're perfectly okay with dividing the province into two groups: Liberal friends and Liberal enemies. Rather than enacting policy that is good for all of Ontario, they are only concerned with enacting policy which is good for their friends. This government has proven time and time again that given the opportunity, they will shirk their responsibility to be open and engage the people they serve, all in an effort to ensure they remain popular with their friends so they can win the next election.

Mr. Speaker, I do support this bill. It is good to see the Liberals recognize the need to be saved from themselves. The G20 made it clear to all that even if a tough course of action is on the table, the Liberals have no problem pursuing it, provided they have the ability to keep it discreet so it won't hurt their image. And as I have pointed out, the Liberals seem intent on shirking their responsibility to be open to the public and stakeholders on tough decisions if it risks hurting their popularity.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals have proved they're not up to the task in using their discretion, so it is necessary to provide legislation to make it so.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I wanted to make a couple of comments on some of the powers going to be given to the electricity and nuclear facilities. The first one I want to address was that guards could exercise the specified powers only on the premises, and these powers would not apply off-premises. Citizens are given the option to enter the premises or to leave, whereas the courthouse powers that are given to security are not the same. I don't see that same privilege there, that a citizen would have the option to leave, and that the security in the courthouse would only have the authority to search on the premises.

That's kind of concerning because of examples used before: If I'm driving a friend of mine to the courthouse—they're interested in seeing the court proceedings; that's their right, it affects their community—and for some reason they're given their ID, the questions of assessment are asked, and, who knows, some suspicion is cast upon them. I understand that court security has the right to search my car, just via me dropping them off. I think that really needs to be examined closer. I've left the premises. I'm not on the property. I'm on my way home. What a shock that would be, to get pulled over just because I dropped off someone at the courthouse and things have escalated to a point where there may be questions about why they're there.

I really think definitions and circumstances need to be detailed and examined under the court security so that there is no room for a grey area when it comes to civil rights. Thank you.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I too want to add my comments this afternoon on the debate on Bill 34.

I want to make reference to rebut the comments made by my colleagues about the whole piece of lack of consultations with the industry and the lack of interest in support of the rural community. That is absolutely not true. Our government, and myself as the PA for the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, recently spent time with rural Ontarians through ROMA, and spent two afternoons meeting with the representatives from different rural communities to hear their concerns, but more importantly to listen to advocates.

The fact of not consulting with the industry about this particular repeal of the legislation again is not true, because we know our staff in the ministry have met with and have spoken with different sectors within the industry about the concerns of court security, the security of power producers and the facilities, as well as talking with police. So to accuse the government of not consulting and not speaking with the community partners about this proposed legislation is absolutely not true. The other thing here is that we are so passionate—which is really wonderful to see, what democracy's about—to allow each one of us, all 107 of us, to have an opportunity to speak and to convey the concerns, but more importantly to have a dialogue and debate on the concerns being raised.

But more importantly, Mr. Speaker, this proposed legislation is about balancing the need to protect security concerns such as the courthouses, the nuclear facilities, but also the concerns about individual civil liberties. The balance piece is critical, Mr. Speaker. Without that piece, we're going to have challenges further ahead. For the end of the day, we've got to make sure this legislation has both.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We continue with questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my privilege and pleasure to offer comments to my colleague Mr. Yurek. I'm glad he stepped forward. He's serving the residents of Elgin–Middlesex–London with integrity, and we, the people of Ontario, are better for it and thank him and his family for his public service.

Mr. Yurek referenced Remembrance Day. It's a day that we should all take not lightly, but with the utmost reverence and respect. People put their lives on the line to ensure that we would have the rights, freedoms and liberties that we truly do enjoy in this great country of ours and this great province. He stated that we can't take that for granted. Something like abusing power of legislation is taking it for granted, and none of us—I don't believe they did it lightly, but nonetheless they did do it, and we need to ensure that that can't happen in the future.

We need to be vigilant to ensure that we do have the freedoms, rights and privileges. We need to be transparent and show respect. We need to not have secret backroom deals. We need to honour that this is a minority Parliament now, going forward, and always bring

things to the House so we can have a sound, balanced approach.

Mr. Yurek brings a balanced approach, and I believe he could provide sound insight to this legislation. I know that he would readily step up and offer his thoughts to ensure there was transparent debate, and thus a valuable piece of legislation for the benefit of the people of Ontario. He suggested that Mr. McGuinty needs to do the honourable thing, to step up, to apologize to the people of Ontario for his secret deals and to stop doing them. He suggested, similarly, that he needs to honour the contract with the horse racing industry. He needs to put a moratorium on the Green Energy Act and give power back to local municipalities. That's what we're here to do: to serve the people.

Mr. Yurek is a principled person and, I believe, brings the necessary approach to this House and to democracy. He seeks to engage in open debate, to work with all members of this House and make decisions and enact legislation that will benefit all people of Ontario. I am proud to support him and my colleagues in support of Bill 34 to ensure it reflects the realities of today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again my pleasure to talk about this issue at hand. I'd like to comment on some of the comments from the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

There are a few things in this minority Parliament I think we have a chance to do. I spoke on this before, and he spoke on it as well: issues like horse racing, health care, how the government has tried to put them together. I think they should both be discussed independently. The issue regarding the horse racing industry is loss of jobs. One decision; what's it going to mean in the other one? That's the issue.

The issue regarding health care is a serious issue in this province and it should be discussed, as it usually is; it should be fully discussed. But we shouldn't try to avoid the issues by lumping them together and making it so you're almost afraid to touch it because of the ramifications in the press. I'm hoping that in the future, with this minority government, we have the chance—and those are just examples—to actually discuss issues and disagree openly. I've got nothing against disagreement; that's democracy.

Those of us who are recently here: We're just getting used to the spin cycle and we're not appreciating it. Hopefully we can shut down the spin cycle and do some handwashing. That's why people are getting frustrated with politics. That's why people in the industries feel they're being sacrificed: because it's not being talked about in the open. That's something we have to hopefully change and something that we hopefully can change when we talk about this bill when it goes to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll return now to the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, who has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the comments made by my colleagues from London–Fanshawe and Timiskaming–Cochrane—is that right? I keep telling them that he's sounding "blue" more and more, and there's a seat over here for him when he gets tired of sitting there.

I'd like to comment on Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—Mr. Walker. I hear little bits of Bill Murdoch every time he speaks, so keep it up. It sounds good.

As I said, I will be supporting this bill. I think it's very important to come out and state your part, that we need the government to be open and transparent. Getting rid of this part of the provision that allows the government to unilaterally take away our rights is a very, very serious law that needs to be revoked.

I did talk about partnerships. I tell you, it's very important to have dialogue, one-on-one communication. As the member from Scarborough—help me out here—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Agincourt.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: —Agincourt, thank you—made, that she likes the passion in the debate that's going on here, and it's open to talk about it, bring out the issues, form solutions and let our constituents' voices come out through us: That's all we were really asking last year when this issue came up; that the government bring it forward so that we could have the same passionate debate and discussion of topics instead of going behind closed doors and taking away people's rights and freedoms.

I've got to remark again: It is a truly beautiful day outside, and I just hope this weather continues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: This has been a very spirited debate. The message that I've heard again and again has been respectful, clear, but very firm. The events of the Toronto G20 summit represented our democracy at its most distorted. We saw a harsh and unflattering portrait of our society and we saw very clearly the substantial gaps in our civilized image.

I should say that one of the happy upshots of all of the discussion we have seen on Bill 34 today and on previous days is that it has brought welcome attention to the Ombudsman's report Caught in the Act. Of course, in that report, the Ombudsman questioned why regulation 233/10 was needed at all to protect the perimeter. The intent and design of the Public Works Protection Act was to protect infrastructure. It wasn't created as a blunt tool for crowd control, even though there was probably enough popular unrest in the 1930s that someone would have crafted that kind of legislation if that was what they were after. It was about protecting vital public infrastructure from the threat of attack from hostile agents. It wasn't about frogmarching law-abiding citizens into holding cells. It wasn't about strip searches because you were out for a walk and had forgotten to take some government photo ID with you.

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What the new bill has done is change the parameters by which they can invoke this act. This bill reframes the

powers available to government somewhat, but it doesn't change the basic fact that the government has always had considerable power within its control. And it doesn't change the fact that the citizens of Ontario expect their government to use its powers in a way that is right and just and fair and transparent. History reminds us that power tends to corrupt and that absolute power corrupts absolutely.

In regulation 233/10, we saw government miss a valuable opportunity for straightforward dialogue with the people of Ontario, and we're seeing it again with Bill 34. We are still seeing a government that is not owning up to its mistakes, a government that is missing the courtesy and honesty of standing up in front of the people of Ontario and simply saying, "We are sorry. We failed your trust."

When we look at the Ombudsman's report, the glaring missteps of this government are plain as day. Here was an event with global profile at a time when the world's attention was focused sharply on solutions. It should have been a phenomenal showcase event for the city of Toronto, where the assets of the city and the wonderful qualities of this beautiful province of Ontario were laid out for all to see. But of course that's not how things played out, Speaker—not even close.

At this point, clearly there isn't anything left to hide. There is hardly anything left for the Premier and this government to reveal, although hardly a week goes by when we don't hear about more secrecy, less transparency.

We've got another report from the Ombudsman coming out this week. Will it contain more of the familiar complaints? We shall see, Speaker. The early indications certainly seem to suggest so.

What this side of the House and Ontarians ask for is an admission of error. It is an issue of responsibility and respect for those who elected us all to this assembly. The Premier's and ministers' perception of leadership abilities would be enhanced, I can assure them, if they choose to accept that errors in judgment and execution were made.

Running a province and administering its law is a job where denial and backroom deals simply cannot be tolerated. Ontario cannot afford that, not in these times, not ever. In a more enlightened society, this kind of event, which was a blatant violation of every principle of democracy and good government, might be grounds to bring an entire government down. We will see nothing like that, mind you. This government is refusing to even offer Ontarians an apology, an apology for a ham-fisted approach to G20 security, for using the law like a blunt object to strip people of their rights. In the absence of that kind of moral honesty, that moment of clarity, how can this House and the people of Ontario be expected to believe that they actually learned their lesson?

The correct course of action here is for the Premier or his spokesperson to rise, give a genuine apology and outline the lessons learned. Don't hide your decisions. Don't rush headlong into law-making without the facts. Don't leave ground for doubt when security and law enforcement are involved. We do not need more of the usual blame games. The game is over. The Ombudsman put an end to it.

We haven't heard this government even admit to the fact that it sounded to them like a good idea at the time, that they thought it would turn out much better or that they were only looking out for our best interests. That wouldn't cut it, of course, but it would still be a more sustainable dialogue than all of the bobbing and weaving that this government has offered up so far.

Mr. Speaker, this government has a real hang-up when it comes to secrecy and stakeholder consultations. Flip through the scathing electricity audit in the Auditor General's report and you will find at least three mentions of key stakeholders not being consulted—major stakeholders. No business case was made to sweeten an already delicious deal for a renewable energy consortium. When the Green Energy Act was passed, no serious economic study was done on the impact it would have in any area, be it energy costs, capacity or even jobs.

Since then, we have seen the talk around the Trillium benefit walk the same kind of line. We've learned that the government took it upon themselves to make a backroom decision impacting the lives of millions of fixed-income Ontarians without ever bothering to bring them into the loop until after the fact.

Going back to Bill 34, what's astounding me is the refusal by this government to both distribute and seek out information. It's becoming an unfortunate habit of this government. Some would say it's becoming more than an unfortunate habit; some would say that it's starting to look like a serious character flaw.

If the government knew they couldn't explain the law, they should have left the courts enough time to place a judicial opinion. Instead, the regulation had to be deemed unconstitutional after the fact, after it had expired and by the Ombudsman rather than the superior court. This province was denied an explanation and denied the chance to seek one.

Let me cite a very moving passage from a landmark US Supreme Court decision. The circumstances may have been different, as is the country, but the principle stands just as solidly here as it does in the United States. The year is 1803. The case is Marbury v. Madison. It is an issue of appointments. Marbury was appointed by an outgoing president, and an election changed the administration. Marbury wanted his appointment papers delivered, by court action if necessary, from the hands of the new Secretary of State, James Madison. It goes to the Supreme Court, which determined Marbury definitely should have had his papers, but the Supreme Court can't force the executive to hand them over, and the law that said it could do so was unconstitutional. It was the first time in the western world a law had been struck down as unconstitutional, as regulation 233/10 would have been. In the ruling, Chief Justice Marshall wrote this passage: "It is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is." That was in 1803.

We don't just make laws; we examine whether they're needed. When we are confused, we seek advice from those who we consider wiser than us in legal matters. This government did neither of those things. Can they really change now?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have some comments on the G34 bill that I've made some concerns over just today and I'd like to go over that again with regard to the part for the Police Services Act, paragraph 2 of subsection 138(1), "Search, without warrant,

"i. a person who is entering or attempting to enter premises where court proceedings are conducted or who is on such premises,"

So I think in that respect, is the premises when you actually enter the front door? Is the premises the boundaries of where you enter in the parking lot? That needs to be really examined and defined.

The other part of that section of the act says, "ii. any vehicle that the person is driving or in which the person is a passenger"—again, without a search warrant.

We have to be really careful of the civil liberties that we're discussing today. Everyone agrees that we don't want any laws to violate civil the liberties that we have now. Entering a courthouse because you are interested in what the court proceedings are, just as an ordinary citizen, you're curious to what's happening—it's disturbing that if we give too many powers, these things can be infringed upon.

I know a young gentleman who went to the courthouse recently to file some papers. His hair is kind of long, and he wears a bandana. The first time he went in the one day, the security officer asked him to remove the bandana or he'd never see it again. He removed the bandana. The second time he went into the courthouse, that security guard didn't ask him to remove the bandana. So there has to be a real set of standards and clarity as to what these questions will be so that there's no abuse of civil liberties.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate and pass comments on the remarks that were made earlier by the member from Burlington. I've listened to the debate since it's been in the House, and it seems to me that there's a trend emerging. That is, people are saying they're going to support the bill, they're going to support its passage through the House, and then they have their say on what their opinion is as to what took place during the G8 and the G20.

I think we have agreement from the House, from what I've heard, that it's time to move on, that it's time to pass this piece of legislation and that it's time to put in place some legislation that better suits today's needs. Should this occasion arise again, we would be, I think, much better equipped. I think we've heard from the public, we've heard from civil liberties groups, we've heard from towns and cities, we've heard from power producers that have the power plants in our province, we've heard from justice officials, and we've heard from members of our police services, both the front ranks and the people that administer the police services in the province of Ontario.

We've also heard from former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry. He gave us some very, very thoughtful advice. I think he's hit the nail on the head, that we're living in a different time today. When this bill was initially written, it was written for a much different time.

So we propose to get rid of an act that was—a bill or an act, whatever you want to call it, an act in this case—written 70 years ago. We're introducing what I think are some new rules that are going to protect the courts better. They're going to protect the nuclear and the other power facilities that we have in the province of Ontario. But most importantly, I think—and I base this on the debate that I've heard from members from all sides of the House—it's also going to very securely protect the civil rights of all Ontarians in the province of Ontario.

I think we all want to strike that balance between the safety of the public and the preservation of civil rights that we hold very dear in the province of Ontario. From what I've heard, there are some differences except for one thing: that it's time to move on. I suggest we do that, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It was a privilege to listen to my colleague from Burlington today as she highlighted some of the problems that we've seen in this government: the one of secrecy and deception that has been a trait of this government.

The Auditor General pointed out that the government must let Ontario know the true costs of green energy. They're hiding these true costs with mistruths, grants and actions that hide these costs, now resulting in the highest power rates in North America, rates that will result in the loss of 60,000 to 120,000 permanent jobs because of the cost of electricity—not just the creation of 30,000 new jobs.

The deception is tearing up the horse racing industry—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, in my time I've been here—according to the standing orders, it's certainly my information that when we respond in the two-minuters, we're supposed to stick to Bill 34. I'd appreciate—at some future point the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry could provide a wonderful speech on a whole variety of other topics, but I think his remarks right now, his two-minuter, should be confined to response to Bill 34. I think those are the rules of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough is quite correct. The responses should

relate back to the original speech. I return to the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry to continue with his two minutes.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I was getting there. I think that our member talked about the deception of this government, and I was giving some examples of that.

But, you know, when we look back and through some of my experiences with this government, the first time I got to know it was as a new mayor: the neighbours across the road that invited a group of Liberal farmers to a meeting and getting chastised for voting or being upset with the legislation they had just enacted back in 2004 and saying that they were embarrassed by this and don't expect any help from this government again.

And that's really why I'd say, you look at this province and you look at rural Ontario. Rural Ontario is finally waking up. It is acts like this that are now in effect—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. We have time for one last question or comment. I return to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to say it's once again my pleasure to talk about this bill, but I've talked about it so many times that it's kind of like pulling teeth.

I think we are all trying to fix the mistakes of the past, and with this bill, when it goes to committee—because it's pretty obvious that it's going to go to committee. I haven't heard anybody yet saying that it's not going to committee. So it's pretty obvious that it's going to committee. Hopefully, in the committee process—and I'm just starting in the committee process, so I haven't really figured out how it all works yet—we will be able to make changes to this bill and to other bills to make this place work and to make it work for Ontarians. I think on all sides of the House we all agree that that's why we were put here. Certainly, in my riding, that's why I was put here.

So on this bill—and that's the one we're discussing; I'm not veering off topic. We are discussing G34. And I'm going to go back to this and I'm going to be a broken record, but the one thing that galls me that happened—and I didn't know it happened until I got here—is that the government of the day or the cabinet of the day decided that it either wasn't worth bringing to the House or it was too serious to bring to the House. So hopefully this will get fixed and hopefully it won't happen again.

In my heart of hearts, if the government can't come out and say, "We're sorry," to the people of Ontario, I can live with that. But I deeply hope that they will in some way say sorry to the people who were put in pens like animals.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Burlington for her two-minute reply.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Speaker, thank you so much. I've been up today a few times and it's been a privilege, actually, speaking to you. My nerves got on edge a few times throughout and looking at your wonderful friendly face calms me down. So thank you for that.

I'd like to thank the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. I echo a lot of the things that you've said today. You're a wonderful speaker, and the best thing about being in here is getting to hear everybody's voice, so thank you so much for that today. I'd also like to thank Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, London–Fanshawe and, of course, the member from Oakville.

It is very engaging when you're in here and having the conversation going back and forth, and having the debate opened up is a wonderful opportunity for all of us, and being new—I guess we can't say that too much longer—it does give us a sense of what this is all about. It is a privilege and an honour to be here in this position, and I am very grateful for that.

But the one question I get asked all the time from Burlingtonians is, "What is the biggest thing that was different for you when you got here?" And I honestly want to say that the biggest thing for me was how many times we ask a question and never get the answer, so that's probably the biggest thing for me.

But anyway, I will be supporting Bill 34, and it was engaging today to be part of that process and to have up a couple of times. Thank you so much to everybody else that was engaged in that debate. I look forward to many more.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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First Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 20 March 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 20 mars 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY GENERATING FACILITIES AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX, DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 19, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2012 / Projet de loi 34, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2012 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Lennox and Addington.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Lennox.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 34 today. Of course, everybody in this chamber and everybody throughout Ontario recognizes the travesty and the injustice that happened back in Toronto during the G20 summit when this government passed a regulation in secret, when the House was not in session, which led to such a travesty of injustice due to the chaos and the complications of that regulation that was passed.

Although there was much hiding and running away from blame during that whole chaotic period of time, the Ombudsman did, I think, a very fine job in reviewing that travesty and providing a number of recommendations. I am very pleased to see that this government has indeed taken steps in their Bill 34 to minimize the opportunities for that sort of injustice to happen again.

Although they've taken steps in that direction, they have not gone far enough, in my view, Speaker. We know that, had the government of the day followed the rules of the day, the rules that regulations must be clear and unambiguous and that they ought to be done in openness and with transparency, we would not have seen the chaos and the injustice that followed during the G20 summit.

Now, I know there have been a number of recommendations by the Ombudsman. His recommendation 3 has not been addressed by this new bill in front of the House—and there's actually no mention of it at all in the bill. The Ombudsman's recommendation is that the ministry should develop a protocol that would call for public information campaigns when police powers are modified by subordinate legislation, particularly in protest situations. There's not any mention of that and, again, I think all members of the House would recognize that that was indeed a significant failing of that G20 regulation. So the Ombudsman's recommendation that proper communication is put forward is silent in Bill 34. This bill still allows for regulations to be developed under Bill 34: for example, the creating of anybody—anybody—to be a peace officer with the authorities under Bill 34. It still allows that to be done through order in council and it allows it to be done without legislative oversight. Now, of course they're supposed to follow the rules, but we saw during the G20 that the government of the day did not follow their own rules. Will they follow the rules under Bill 34? I'm not sure.

I don't think anybody can be sure, because we've seen this is a real—the irony in this, Speaker, is that the laws are passed to punish lawbreakers. What happens when the lawmakers break their own laws? And that's what happened with the G20: The government of the day did not provide a clear, unambiguous regulation. They hid from it and they didn't tell anybody about it. We had the minister at the time, Minister Bartolucci; we had the chief of police; we've had the federal ministers—nobody knew what anybody was doing. And in the process, over 1,000 innocent people were rounded up, had their freedoms removed, were incarcerated. There were a number of truly abusive situations that came forward, and a few, a handful of the hoodlums, did get caught. I don't know how many more got away, but that's what happens when you create a situation of chaos and confusion.

But once again, the lawmakers didn't even follow their own rules, and I don't believe anybody in this Legislature would believe that it was an oversight or it was misfortune that that regulation was done in the fashion it was done when it was introduced when the House was not in session; when it was gazetted in dark-

ness; no public scrutiny at all. We knew that that G20 summit was coming long in advance. We knew that the regulation needed to be done up, but they waited until the House was out of session before that regulation was put forward.

Pieces of legislation that grant such authority are necessary, but what is also necessary is that safeguards are used judiciously, that they're used cautiously and that they're done in an open and transparent fashion so that we do not have thousands of innocent people incarcerated and the hoodlums who get away.

0910

I think the Ombudsman's report—he says here, "Generally, police authority is conferred through enactment of legislation, accompanied by the openness, transparency, and accountability inherent in the democratic system of government. There is a real and insidious danger associated with using subordinate legislation, passed behind closed doors."

We still have that regulation-making authority within this act. I don't know when this act might be used again, when that regulation may be used again, but we know from history now and from experience that some governments will not follow their own laws, will not follow their own rules, and we will not necessarily get that openness and transparency that the Ombudsman so purposely recommended in this legislation.

I would hope and expect that recommendation number 3 is thoroughly discussed at committee and that there are indeed substantial safeguards included in this legislation so that if another regulation has to be made under it, we have indeed legislative oversight and not another travesty, like what happened at the G20.

Speaker, this speaks back to the role of this Legislature and all regulations, the very limited opportunities we have as legislators and as members of this House to actually scrutinize the value of the regulations that are passed. I think it's incumbent on all of us to ensure that there are indeed new mechanisms put in place that allow legislators to review all regulations here in this House, have them have a good airing so that we can see either the merit or the incompetence of regulations that are created by order in council and created behind closed doors, and we never get to see them in the light of day until a problem has already been foisted upon the people of Ontario.

There are some changes that could be done in the regulations and private bills committee to expand the scope of that committee that would have been able to look at this G20 regulation. I look forward that indeed all members of this Legislature see the value in this Legislature scrutinizing subordinate regulations. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Time for questions and comments. The member for Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to rise today because the question that we're talking about here is amending a law that deeply offended Ontarians and deeply impacted the civil liberties of people in this province. Ultimately, this is an issue of credibility. You know, we need to make sure that we have the confidence of the people in this province, that one way or another people believe that there is a political system that is democratic and that is responsible.

During the G20, people were out on the streets because they had a severe lack of confidence about democracy around the globe, and we reinforced that concern on that day. At the time after that, back in 2010, the NDP did ask for a public inquiry and that's the thing we still need to get to the bottom of here: Should this have ever even taken place on the streets of this city? Should Ontario ever have hosted this? My colleague yesterday spoke about the richness of an international conference that was preaching austerity around the world, yet we spent over $1 billion in security over that weekend. I would like to have an inquiry about what we could have done with that billion dollars. Was that the best kind of economic stimulus that we needed in Ontario, or could we have put that into creating jobs in this province? We still never heard from this government.

Part of the credibility crisis here is that Ontarians look around, and they see two parties—the PCs and the Liberals—who speak as if they're different, sometimes, but then they enact the same thing. So instead of taking responsibility for their Conservative cousins federally who brought this in, we throw it across to the Liberals provincially.

The truth is that Ontarians have lost confidence because they see Tweedledum and Tweedledee; it's really the same parties here doing the same things. If we're going to restore Ontarians' faith in the democratic process, we need to make sure that there's real accountability, real transparency, and that we actually have that public inquiry that gets to the bottom of this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes, the House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I listened with interest to the comments from the member from Lennox—where are you from?

Interjection: Frontenac.

Hon. John Milloy: —Frontenac and Addington, as well as the NDP speaker.

I am impressed with the amount of power and authority that the opposition has given this government. We had 20 of the world's leaders, including President Barack Obama and the Prime Minister of Britain. They all came to Toronto. We had the federal government spend $1 billion to welcome them here and gazebos and everything else. We had security from across the nation here. We had the federal government putting together this huge summit. But Madam Speaker, it wasn't the federal government, according to the opposition, even though it was an international summit, even though we welcomed these leaders from all around the world, and our Prime Minister was there, and the Governor General was there, and there was federal security and national security. According to the opposition, no, that had nothing to do with them; it was all the fault of the Ontario government.

We were one piece of a larger security puzzle, a puzzle which was under—as it should have been, appro-

priately—the umbrella of the federal government. This was an international summit. It demanded complex security matters; that was taken control of by the federal government. We played a small part.

Were there problems? Of course there were, Madam Speaker, which is why we asked Mr. Justice McMurtry, a former member of this Legislature, a former Attorney General of the province of Ontario and former chief justice, to take a look at it and to come forward with recommendations, which we put forward in this bill.

What happened at the G20 is something that will be debated, something that is being looked at. But at the end of the day, it was the federal government, it was the Prime Minister, it was the federal security people who came to Toronto and had a summit, a summit which, as I said, welcomed some of the most vulnerable leaders, shall we say, from a security point of view, and demanded security across the board. We should be looking to Ottawa when we talk about the G20.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comment?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington—that's probably the start for a very long name for a riding—makes a very good point. I recall he said, "Lawmakers don't even follow their own rules," and that's really the substance of why we're so upset on this side. In the climate that the previous member spoke about, yes, it was an important event for Toronto, the top city in Canada, and it was very kind of Harper to allow them to facilitate it, but what was left to the police forces in the province of Ontario, which come under the jurisdiction of the province, was to arrange the activity.

What Premier McGuinty and his cabinet did is really what's at question here. In fact, they realized they'd made a mistake, not responding appropriately to the security that was required for these world leaders, and they had a secret meeting, which has been disclosed now. In that meeting, they invoked sort of like the Trudeau-style War Measures Act. They kind of overreacted.

Then the forces themselves were in contradiction with the chief of police, as well as—what he said at one time and what he said at another time were a contradiction in themselves. It was the individuals' freedoms that were imperilled during the time—unfairly. There was no process to resolve those disputes. It's people's independence and freedom that really need to be stood up for.

Now, the government did admit they made an error because they called on Roy McMurtry, the former Chief Justice of Ontario, to look into the Public Works Protection Act, and his recommendation was quite—why didn't they call Mr. McMurtry or someone else before the secret meeting or during the secret meeting? This is the type of government McGuinty, in a sort of arrogant way, has: forgo the freedoms and liberties of individuals and look for the cloak-and-dagger method. That's simply not acceptable.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to respond to the comments from the Minister of Community and Social Services. In fact, Justice McMurtry and the Ombudsman both kind of placed the blame not only on the federal government, but on the provincial government as well in the reports that we've seen. We know that there were 18 months of police infiltration around the G20, leading up to the summit. This was intentional and planned and an abuse of authority and power—and in violation of our rights, in violation of our freedoms, unconstitutional in every way.

0920

It was the provincial government that actually passed regulation 233/10. It wasn't the federal government; it was the provincial government. So both levels of government, the provincial and the federal, need to take responsibility.

To date, they've never apologized to the people of Ontario, and I think that they need to apologize to the people of Ontario, and we need to still have that public inquiry. I think that the people of Ontario would feel better to have that inquiry and to be able to come and make presentations. I know that John Pruyn, who I spoke about here I think last week or the week before, in my riding, who was arrested, who was disabled, who was an amputee and had his leg ripped off, would be more than happy to have an inquiry. In fact, I had an email from him this week thanking me for raising this again in the House and asking me to continue to raise this issue until his concerns are addressed by this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you. I'd like to thank the members from Davenport, Durham, Welland and, of course, the government House leader for their comments.

Clearly, the government House leader started building that complicated puzzle and still hasn't finished it, and is still very puzzled about the work of the Legislature and what his role in it is.

Let me clarify, out of the standing orders of this House, what rules this government broke in the enacting of that regulation. The following principles are laid down to guide the committee in the examination of regulations: "Regulations should not contain provisions initiating new policy, but should be confined to details to give effect to the policy established by the statute...."

They "should be expressed in precise and unambiguous language."

Now, take a look at that regulation. I challenge the member from Guelph, who was interjecting earlier, to actually read the regulation and see if it is precise and unambiguous. It is absolutely atrocious, Madam Speaker, that the member from Guelph, who hasn't read anything, comes in and says that this regulation is good. It is contrary to the standing orders of this House, that the regulation is not done in precise and unambiguous language, and there is still nothing in Bill 34 that would compel this government to follow through and protect the

rights and freedoms of the citizens and residents of Ontario so that they are not dealt injustice from the hands of government, which is there to protect them.

I said that this bill takes some important steps. Let's make sure that the steps are complete and the journey is complete—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): A point of order?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I would like the record to reflect that what I said was that I had read the regulation, not that I had not.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): That's not a point of order; thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The designation of the security zone as a public work was done in secret by the McGuinty cabinet on June 2, through an order in council. The change was posted to the government's e-Laws website on June 16, but oddly, the designation did not appear in print until the July 3 issue of the government publication, the Ontario Gazette. The change to the little-known Public Works Protection Act came into effect on June 21, Speaker, four days before the G8/G20 summit, and it expired on June 28. This means the government had three weeks to inform the public and did not.

I was mayor of the city of North Bay at the time and a seven-year member of the police services board at the time, and I must say I was confused by the ambiguity. Speculation about what special powers had been granted to the police was swirling through the media, and yet the government did nothing to clarify the regulation. In fact, Speaker, the Ombudsman called it "a premeditated, conscious decision not to announce the existence of the regulation or the reviving of this wartime act."

Speaker, I would like to read you, if I may, the February 22 Toronto Star story called "'Secret' G20 Law to be Scrapped," which is what we're talking about today. It's written by Tanya Talaga and Robert Benzie of the Queen's Park bureau, with contribution, it appears, by Rene Johnston from the Toronto Star. It says, "The Liberals are replacing the archaic 'secret' law police used" to place hundreds of people under arrest during the G20 summit in 2010.

"The Public Works Protection Act has been shelved in favour of a new bill that would apply only to securing power plants and courthouses, said Community Safety Minister Madeleine Meilleur.

"The legislation, introduced Wednesday, was created out of recommendations of the former Chief Justice Roy McMurtry in the wake of the G20 fiasco. It is far narrower in scope than the old law.

"'It will be limited because we are following Judge McMurtry's advice and, according to him, the Criminal Code covers the rest,' Meilleur said Wednesday.

"The bill will allow people to be asked for identification and to be searched when they enter court buildings. It also allows for the use of reasonable force to remove a person where court proceedings are being conducted.

"It provides the power to arrest a person committing any of the offences listed in the bill, 'without warrant and using reasonable force if necessary,' the legislation states. A person convicted of any of the offences can be fined up to $2,000, face imprisonment of up to 60 days, or both.

"During the June 2010 Toronto G20 summit, the obscure 1939 Public Works Protection Act, enacted to secure against Nazi saboteurs early in World War II, was used to quietly pass a regulation giving police broad powers of arrest.

"That directive was merely supposed to clarify police powers within the secure summit site at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, but people were misled into believing it applied to an area five metres outside the cordoned-off zone.

"While only two of the 1,105 arrests made during the G20 related to the act, there was widespread outcry over the so-called secret law.

"'This was an occasion for us to review legislation passed in the middle of the Second World War,' said Meilleur, who did not offer an apology for what many civil liberties groups felt was an abuse of power.

"Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak said the Liberals 'lost touch' with the public by using a World War II-era law to round up people during the summit.

"'Nobody forced them to bring in the secret law at the G20. Nobody forced their arm,' said Hudak. 'It was a major scandal for the province.'

0930

"NDP leader Andrea Horwath said the new law is an 'admission' of failure on the part of the Liberal government.

"'They made a big mistake when they were preparing for the G20 and they're ignoring the fact that mistake trampled people's civil rights, civil liberties,' said Horwath.

"McMurtry's 54-page report on the old law noted the 'potential for abuse' was 'beyond troubling' and said it was a 'loaded weapon' that threatened civil liberties.

"Under the act, police or private security guards do not have to justify their actions against citizens, he pointed out."

Speaker, again, I served as mayor of the city of North Bay during that period, which should have been a spectacularly wonderful period in Ontario. Instead, it left a black mark, and it left a lot of questions. I served as vice-chair of our police board, and even at the time we questioned our own police authority, our own police services, "What does this possibly mean? What could this mean?" Even then, we could not get the right answers. We could not get answers, period. That ambiguity led to confusion, it led to mistrust, and it led to part of the problem that we saw here in the city of Toronto and elsewhere.

This act, Bill 34, will rectify part of the problem, but it still does not erase the history that we saw. So I would

suggest that we continue the debate on this. I look forward to hearing the continued discussion on this, Speaker. I think that it's incredibly important that the law be clear. There can never be ambiguity. When we look at what happened that day and the days leading up to the events, we do know that people didn't understand what the law was. They weren't told. Even though the law was indeed passed in secret by the McGuinty cabinet on June 2 through an order-in-council—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Like Samsung.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, to my fellow member, it was passed in secret, like Samsung. It was posted on June 16, but it did not appear until July 3 in the Gazette. There was obviously an intention here to keep this secret, and if not secret, at least to keep it ambiguous. I think that when you put this change into effect on June 21, four days before the summit, but don't really explain to the public what this new law is—they didn't even know there was a new law, but then people were being charged under a new law that they didn't know existed. How can that be here in Ontario, Speaker? That doesn't sound like the Ontario that I like to live in.

Again, the government had three weeks to inform the public and chose not to do that. What does that say about the government, and what does that say about our services? Speculation about what special powers had been granted to the police swirled through the media and through the crowds. It was that ambiguity that caused so much problem here during the G8 and G20, which should have been a real opportunity to showcase Ontario. We ended up showcasing a different side of Ontario, with 1,105 arrests being made under this law that people did not even know existed. Again, the government did absolutely nothing to clarify that regulation.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments or questions?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you to the member from Nipissing for his comments. I would just correct one of them: There were 1,100 people detained—detained. Only two arrests were made. That's a very strong indication of what went wrong on the G20 weekend.

I was there all three days. On the first day, on Saturday, I demonstrated with hundreds of Tibetans who were demonstrating the occupation of their country. They witnessed very similar kinds of policing to what was going on in Tibet at that time, set into place—and this is a fact that cannot be disputed—by regulation 233/10, put into place by the McGuinty government.

Again, is there blame to go around? Absolutely. Federal blame? Absolutely. Provincial blame? Also, absolutely. This has been well documented in two inquiries: one, Justice McMurtry's, who slammed this government for their actions; and also, of course, the Ombudsman, who slammed them as well. In fact, his report was called Caught in the Act, referring to this government.

Again, these are all facts. They cannot be disputed. There's no point in debating them because they're truth. The question remains, however, with the passage of this bill, which we're going to support, that there was never a public inquiry, which is what the New Democratic Party called for, so that we could actually question the cabinet and find out why, secretly, while this Legislature was in session, they passed a regulation no one knew about, and fewer understood, without bringing it to this assembly. I would say that was a breach of privilege, a breach of the democratic rights of everyone in this assembly and everyone that we represent. They brought it in. They did not debate it. We didn't know about it until well, well after. Again, that's an undisputed fact. For that, I think, Madam Speaker, we should have an apology.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Let me say I thought the member from Nipissing provided some very thoughtful commentary this morning on Bill 34. In fact, we all welcome that Bill 34 will be proceeding to have a thorough review at committee and clause-by-clause. There will be an opportunity for people to come in to make presentations.

Certainly, we welcome the report by the Ombudsman and the report done by Chief Justice McMurtry to help us put in place a new bill to deal with circumstances that perhaps will occur some time down the road, when another summit or international gathering would occur right here in the province of Ontario.

It is interesting, though, during a couple of situations—if you go back to the War Measures Act in 1970, at that particular time, because of police intelligence and other intelligence, there was an opportunity for people who were sworn in to the Privy Council of Canada so that that intelligence could be shared with them at that time. Perhaps at this particular time, there would have been an opportunity to swear in some people from the third party and the opposition, in terms of sharing any potential intelligence that was relevant in terms of the protection of people who were going to be assembled here in Toronto as a result of the G20 summit being held in this wonderful city.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comment?

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen closely to the member from Nipissing. With his experience that he has outlined, as a mayor of a municipality and as well being on the police services board, he was involved first-hand, if you will, at least in observing how the issue unfolded. I think he was right in his research. The report by the Toronto Star, I believe—the Toronto Star is often referred to as the "Liberal briefing notes." That account was quite accusatory of the Liberals' secret deal.

In fact, as has been mentioned even here this morning, again, the admission of failure by the McGuinty government was clearly—Roy McMurtry's report was entitled Caught in the Act. He said clearly that it was a secret deal. What's most troubling, as I said in my last remarks, and I think the member from Nipissing said as well, is that it's the expunging or the infringement on civil rights of individuals—and that's really what the

government should be standing up for. I think the member from Nipissing used the term, "He had lost touch with the people of Ontario," and I think it's true.

In fact, I find it almost troubling when they introduced the HST, as an example, how it affected seniors. They've lost touch with their ability to pay. They've lost touch with respect to people's individual rights and freedoms, and this is the most troubling part.

0940

This bill, although it needed to be reformed, the question then—a competent government would say, "How do I deal with this challenge of world leaders being here?" and consult with the chiefs of police and the OPP and other experts, including Roy McMurtry, and they would have realized the bill was an inadequate tool to deal with the situation. That's a lack of leadership. That's fundamentally what the discussion's about here. And then, on top of it, watching the TV, it's clear—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I also had the opportunity to listen very carefully to some of the remarks made by the member from Nipissing, and I agree with the concern regarding laws being clear and not being ambiguous. If we tie this into the issue of secrecy, what creates great concern is, what is our government's, in total—our approach to dissent? What is our approach to democracy? If we believe that dissent is a healthy part of democracy, then if we look at this bill and we look at the fact that the government passed these laws or these powers in secrecy, look at the two groups of effects. One, it's going to affect—there's a security interest, which we'll touch on in a moment, but there are either protesters or there are lay citizens. So this bill will affect those two components of society.

Now, by not making the law clear or not informing the public, it's directly impacting those who are protesting and even those who are casually in that area. It's directly affecting Ontario citizens, and it's very concerning that, in light of the fact that this law will affect the citizens of Ontario, they weren't consulted, nor were they even given the awareness of this law in the first place. It speaks to a lack of respect for dissent.

If we believe that a vibrant society should encourage dissent, should encourage people who don't agree with what's going on, raising their voice as a healthy part of a democracy, as a healthy part of society, then we should ensure that those people who wish to engage in that right have the right to do so—and are actually encouraged to do so—in a safe, secure manner; not in an ambiguous manner, not in a manner in which there is so much lack of clarity that people who are simply walking by an area just out of curiosity are caught up in this law or caught up and taken into custody, their rights being taken away.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The me mber for Nipissing has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park, the member from Peterborough, the member from Durham and the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for their thoughtful comments on this as well.

Speaker, I do want to quote some script from Hansard, where our leader, Tim Hudak, weighed in on this. He was speaking when this first came out. He was speaking here in the Legislature, and he commented:

"This was not a simple error. It was not a simple mistake. The Ombudsman said that this was a premeditated plan to keep the general public in the dark.

"Before the minister, there were cabinet meetings, including up to 14 ministers who could have put a stop to this extraordinary law and who could have said, 'No, it is wrong to conspire to keep what's equivalent to the War Measures Act secret from the general public.' Not one had the courage to stand up and say that this was wrong. In fact, the emails the Ombudsman has uncovered show you actually put your minds to work on how to keep these illegal war measures a secret."

Speaker, he went on to say:

"According to the Ombudsman ... the Premier's office ... also had its fingerprints on the ... G20 regulation and the plot to keep it a secret. On page 57, the Ombudsman quotes from a Ministry of Community Safety email which states that the Premier's office had also been consulted and 'are fine with this moving forward.'"

Speaker, this in itself indicates the intent of the government on the G20 act, and we're looking—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak on this important legislation that is so necessary following what the citizens of Toronto experienced last year during the G20.

I also want to thank my colleagues who have spoken so graciously and eloquently on the matter before me.

It's important that we make clear exactly what happened that week: The G20 meetings in 2010, an event to be a source of pride for all Ontarians and particularly for the world-class city of Toronto—yet its hopeless mismanagement ended up being a blot on our province's otherwise shining record as a place of enormous respect for civilians' civil liberties.

Madam Speaker, our party has often spoken about the crippling, confusing effect that excess regulation can have on Ontario business, costing our province billions and leaving business owners feeling helpless and disoriented. In the span of events running up to the G20 meetings, we found out just what a devastating effect misplaced regulation can have on our civil liberties.

It was this cabinet that invoked a muddled use of regulation 233/10 of the Public Works Protection Act and turned the perimeter of the G20 meetings into a massive public work. In the days and weeks that followed, rumour began to spread about secret police powers that had been granted to our police forces, allowing them to arrest any citizen caught protesting within a given zone around the meetings. It was a moment of concern for all that these rumours were allowed to spread with zero clarification from the Premier or the then minister in charge.

Our police services were suddenly viewed with suspicion in the eyes of the public. The government that occupies this very House was seen as totalitarian and completely without regard for the freedoms we all enjoy as Canadians. We know that is not the case. I think we all understand and Ontarians understand that there's a time and a place when the public safety needs to be taken into account by means of extraordinary measures, where there is a threat of harm to innocent bystanders. Yet this act went too far in its implications and implementations, and the McMurtry report made that very clear. It was a good thing, too, because clarity was not forthcoming from this government at a very confusing time.

It's my belief, and one, I believe, shared by my colleagues, that the regulation invoked by the government at the time of the G20 meetings granted powers above and beyond the ability of the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services to dictate. It was a sobering moment for us all, yet not surprising to anyone on this side of the House, when Mr. McMurtry set out in his report a condemnation of the overreaching efforts taken by the government to address the challenge of security at the international summit.

I quote from the report, which said that the law had a "potential for abuse" that was "beyond troubling." "Beyond troubling," Madam Speaker—not words one would normally associate with a freedom-loving and respectful province such as Ontario. The report called it a "loaded weapon" that threatens civil liberties—again, Madam Speaker, yet another blot on the record of this government, who has shamefully refused to apologize for passing this legislation in the first place.

0950

I believe this legislation is the correct thing to do. It's the honourable thing to do after the honour of the province was so severely tarnished in the wake of this horrible mismanagement. It is with great pleasure that I support this effort, and I call upon the government to exercise the same discretion they have today in future, so that the need for such correctional legislation not rise again.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, just a couple of other points I'd like to make on this issue.

The outdated Public Works Protection Act included wartime powers for the protection of public works, but relied too much on the discretion of the minister. In addition, the former Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the McGuinty cabinet used that discretion to secretly introduce special powers for police and fostered the widespread confusion that followed by abdicating any responsibility to clarify what the law said. This legislation removes the minister's discretion to grant special powers of arrest, but it does not address the lack of sound judgment and the finger-pointing demonstrated during the G20 by the McGuinty government.

Just as a bit of background, Madam Speaker, I'd like to bring forth a couple of additional points. You know, in the lead-up to the 2010 G20 summit in Toronto, the McGuinty cabinet invoked regulation 233/10 under the Public Works Protection Act, making the G20 zone a public work from June 21 through to June 28. Media coverage leading up to the summit circulated around reports of police being granted special powers of arrest up to five metres on either side of the security fencing in the G20 zone, as requested by Toronto police chief Bill Blair. There was widespread confusion leading up to and during the G20 summit about exactly where the special powers of arrest applied amongst the public and police and in the media. It was only after the summit was over that the government publicly acknowledged that the police were never granted powers of arrest five metres outside of the area designated a public work under the regulation. This suggested to many that the government deliberately misled the public to bluff protesters from occupying the area surrounding the G20 security zone.

So again, it is with great pleasure that I support this effort, and I call upon the government to exercise the same discretion that they have today in future, so that the need for such correctional legislation not rise again.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd just like to commend the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex for a good presentation.

I think there's a common element going on here in this House, Madam Speaker. We seem to believe that the party across the floor has a real problem with the words "I made a mistake. I'm sorry." They don't want to come forward and say it. I'm surprised that not one of the cabinet ministers, or even the Premier himself, simply could tell the people of Ontario, "We apologize for the G20 situation and we certainly are going to address it and make changes." They are addressing it and making changes, but what concerns me is the arrogance. When I was a small child or growing up, I was taught to say, "Sorry," if I did something wrong. It's not a big thing, but it's a big thing to the people you represent.

They want to hear, you know, governments are not above them. Governments are for them and work for them, and they want them to be human, a human side to this building. I don't think that goes on a lot around here. It's very disappointing, Speaker, that people can't take the path of forgiveness and ask for the people to consider that maybe they're human and maybe they made a mistake. I think that's what the problem is around here, that there should be more give-and-take and more working together as a group and taking responsibility for things that go wrong in this province. Mind you, in the last eight years, a lot of things have gone wrong, and we find ourselves in a deficit position that's never been done in this province before.

We certainly have to address these things. We have to come forward. We have to give good results to the people of Ontario. We have to show them that we can make mistakes, but we also can solve the mistakes. I don't see a lot of that.

They have to work together, and that's what I'd like to see more of around here, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I did listen intently this morning to my good friend the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex. Hopefully, in the not-too-distant future—I know the former member had a private member's bill to actually rename the riding to Chatham–Kent–Leamington because Leamington, of course, is that section of Essex county that really is in this riding. I know there was great representation from the wonderful people from Leamington that were very supportive of the renaming of the riding to Chatham–Kent–Leamington to actually reflect the geographic area of that community, but we could have that debate another day.

I appreciate the member's comments this morning. Bill 34 will be going to committee in the not-too-distant future. As the member has articulated, people get an opportunity to appear in front of committee as we go through clause-by-clause to make this piece of legislation as best as it can be and really putting in place a framework, if Toronto or some other Ontario city gets the opportunity to host another G20 summit or other significant international gathering in our wonderful province, where security will always be an issue, for how we can handle it for the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comment?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a couple of minutes of comments to the wonderful address from the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex.

I remember back to the last sitting of the Legislature, in those days leading up to the secret law being passed by cabinet. The Tuesday—Tuesday, May 31—we all sat here; it was a late session into the evening, and we did tributes to retiring members. The Premier even sat in the chamber for the entire evening, and it was that wonderful moment at the last sitting where we seemed to be moving forward together. We had wonderful non-partisan tributes to all of our retiring members. And then Wednesday, because the Speaker made a comment at the very end of the night that may have been seen as a bit of a jab to the Premier—the word started spreading the next day, on June 1, that we were going to prorogue, and we did that day. It was the next day, June 2, a day that we were scheduled to sit, that cabinet passed that secret law.

Again, I think many speakers today have talked about the arrogance of the government, the fact that it's our role as elected officials to protect innocent citizens from being abused by the state. As MPPs, we had no chance to do that—

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks for giving me the dates. I appreciate that. Thanks.

We've had no ability to stand up to those who were elected to serve us. We had no opportunity, and as the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington spoke about earlier this morning, it was a clear sign that this government has lost its way.

I can appreciate the member for Peterborough talking about committee hearings, but I think we have to address the issue, and I'm glad the member spoke this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes, the member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I just wanted to speak a little bit to the bill: section 138(1), about the requirement of a person who's entering or attempting to enter a court proceedings; the requirement to provide identification; the requirement to provide information; and what kind of information that's actually going to be.

It clearly doesn't set out in this bill the kinds of questions that court officials are going to be able to ask people. The government, the week before last, talked about wanting to be more open and transparent with this legislation, but in fact pieces of it are very grey.

The kinds of questions that come to my mind that court officials might ask, and that might actually violate people's human rights, are: What's your political affiliation? Who's your employer? What kind of work do you do? What is your ethnic background or your cultural background like? What is your economic status? What are your religious affiliations, or what are your family relationships? Do you have a criminal record, even a minor conviction, or does someone in your family? Those kinds of things concern me.

Yesterday, when I was out in the Toronto–Danforth area for the by-election, we had Canadian citizens actually turned away at the polls because they didn't have the kind of information that the polling clerks wanted. People went with a passport, but they needed to have a driver's licence. And on that note, I'd just like to congratulate Craig Scott on his win.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Again, I'd like to thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the member from Peterborough, the member from Leeds–Grenville and, of course, the member from Welland for speaking as well on this particular and all-important issue.

Madam Speaker, one of the things we need to be careful of is that we don't turn things into what I would call a police state. You know, people have rights; they have civil rights.

I'd like to quote something from our leader, Tim Hudak. Tim made this comment in 2010. He said that the Liberals have "lost touch" with the public by using a World War II-era law to round up people during the summit.

I've found that when you push people, the natural tendency is for them to push back, and suddenly force gets bigger and gets stronger on both sides, and the next thing you know, you almost have a riotous state, which is not good.

"Nobody forced them to bring in the secret law at G20. Nobody forced their arm," said our leader, Tim Hudak. "It was a major scandal for the province."

I'd also like to quote the NDP leader, Andrea Horwath, who said that the new law is an "admission" of failure on the part of the Liberal government: "They made a big mistake when they were preparing for the

G20, and they're ignoring the fact that mistake trampled people's civil rights, civil liberties."

McMurtry's 54-page report on the old law noted the potential for abuse was beyond troubling and said that it was "a loaded weapon" that threatened civil liberties.

Madam Speaker, we have not heard apologies from the opposite side, from the government, and I'm of the firm belief that when you mess up, you fess up.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Madame Meilleur has moved second reading of Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2012.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Absolutely not.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. No.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until after question period today.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: No further business, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1004 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'd like to introduce Maria Matias, who is my constituent in Etobicoke–Lakeshore. She's here today to see her granddaughter, Emma Mogus, who is one of our pages.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to welcome the Camping in Ontario group here today. Specifically, I'm meeting later with Stéphane Deschênes and Roland Goreski. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: These are the family of our wonderful page Seph Burghardt. His grandparents are here, Ann Marshall and Richard Marshall Sr.; his parents, Madeline Burghardt and Richard Marshall; his brothers, Tonnan Marshall Burghardt and Raffi Marshall Burghardt. All welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to welcome two groups of great individuals visiting Queen's Park today. One is from Camping in Ontario. I want to welcome Robert Trask, Alexandra Anderson, Guida Williamson, Stéphane Deschênes, Mike Tomaszewski, Lisa Veritis. As well, from the organization the Ontario Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association: Chris Stovold, Roland Goreski, Rick Allain, Andrew Thomson, Rob Edwards, Steve Meades and Larry Boyd.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to introduce Alexandra Anderson and Larry Boyd from Camping in Ontario. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to introduce two guests in the gallery today: Mr. Michael Giroux, who's the president of the Canadian Wood Council, and Marianne Berube, the Ontario executive director for Wood WORKS!. They were here for my launch of my private member's bill.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would like to welcome Robert Trask, president of the Ontario camping association, and Steve Meades, president of Ontario RV association, both from my riding. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to introduce Maria Matias, the grandmother of our page Emma Mogus from Halton.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I want to welcome to the Legislature relatives of page Nicholas Peters on behalf of my colleague from Scarborough Southwest. Joining us today are: Joe Peters; Irene Makeeff; Lydia Makeeff; Winston and Nadia Shantora; and sister Olivia Peters, a former page of the Legislature. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Speaking of such, I would like to also introduce my other brother, Joe. Thanks for being here.

Sitting beside Joe is Mr. Steve Peters, the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London for the 37th, 38th, and 39th Parliaments and Speaker of the 39th Parliament. Welcome, Steve.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have to say this again: I hope that when I come back and visit, I'll have the same reception. We'll have to see what happens.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right, stop the heckling.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): At this time, I would ask all of our members to join me in welcoming our new group of legislative pages. If they can assemble, please.

Our pages now are serving in their first session of the 40th Parliament: Hassan Alayche from Hamilton Mountain; Asha Ali from Etobicoke North; Lauren Barry from Prince Edward–Hastings; Emily Chalmers from Don Valley West; Sharmeila Cherla from Mississauga–Brampton South; Julia Cole from Beaches–East York; Liam Donnelly from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale; Alexander Forgay from St. Paul's; Abbigail Groskleg from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke; Teresa Han from Willowdale; Kyle Hendrikx from Sarnia–Lambton; Victoria Jagmohan from Scarborough–Rouge River; Ammaar Jan from Pickering–Scarborough East; Emma Lang from Kenora–Rainy River; Aylin Ma from Don Valley East; Seph Marshall Burghardt from Park-

dale–High Park; Domenique Mastronardi from Chatham–Kent–Essex; Preston McInnis from Windsor–Tecumseh; Emma Mogus from Halton; Nicholas Peters from Scarborough Southwest; Alexander Ruddy from Niagara Falls; Felix Weber from Perth–Wellington.

Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, I want to return to our conversation yesterday about the high levels of debt in Ontario and its negative impact on job creation and investment. I'll remind you that you're on track to a $30-billion deficit and tripling Ontario's provincial debt to some $400 billion.

Rating agencies and investment banks in New York City told me that governments that have high levels of debt won't be able to afford lower taxes, won't be able to invest in infrastructure to make their economies competitive. They know that tax increases are far more likely to occur under governments that cannot control their spending. These signals affect the economy, they chill investment and they slow economic growth.

Speaker, the problem is, the Premier has already indicated that he's going to have higher taxes in his budget to finance further government spending.

Premier, do you believe that high debt and higher taxes create jobs or do they kill jobs in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I am pleased to entertain the question and to speak to what has happened to taxes in Ontario. With respect to corporate income taxes, my colleague will know that we have reduced those a few times already. He will know we've eliminated the capital tax. He will know that we have cut the small business income tax. He will know that we've eliminated the small business deduction surtax. He will know that we've adopted the HST.

I know my colleague is fond of recounting his experiences outside the country, but just recently the finance minister and myself had a good meeting in Toronto, and we heard there that a Canadian bank is now paying—for every dollar they earn in New York City, they pay 45 cents in tax. If that bank earns that dollar here in Toronto, Speaker, they're paying 25 cents in tax.

We're giving our businesses a decided competitive advantage in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Speaker, I think only Premier McGuinty believes that taxes are lower in Ontario under his government. That's certainly not what families and businesses say.

Premier, political leadership in 2012 is about reminding people why we need to reduce spending. Businesses won't invest; they won't create jobs in countries with a debt crisis. I ask the Premier to name a business that's investing in Greece today.

1040

In fact, Premier, high debt is inversely related to confidence in our economy. It's inversely related to job creation and investment. Using new debt to pay for new spending may be politically expedient for you, but it is not political leadership in 2012.

Premier, for nine years—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Tim Hudak: —you've kicked the can down the road. Will we see finally in this budget you'll pick up the can and make tough decisions to rein in runaway spending?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, let's try to move beyond the general and hone in on the specific. Let's talk about a specific choice. In government, Speaker, we believe that there are better choices than financing the horse racing industry to the tune of $245 million on an annual basis. That's a specific choice, Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague and his fellow Conservatives are struggling with this very straightforward choice. We believe it's more important to use our precious dollars to support health care and education than to support the horse racing industry. We're very clear when it comes to that specific kind of a choice, Speaker.

I'd encourage my colleague to tell us why it is he stands against a preference for health care and education over horse racing in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, sadly, Speaker, the Premier continues to engage in specious arguments that are effectively nothing more than tax grabs to finance further runaway spending.

Premier, what you fail to understand—and the lesson that's being felt in countries around the world—is that governments create the conditions for economic growth when they get the fundamentals right. We believe to keep your fiscal house in order, to keep marginal tax rates low, to encourage workplace flexibility, to let markets work on their own—when you get those fundamentals right, Speaker, jobs follow, investment takes place and Ontario will be a leader in Canada again.

Premier, which of those fundamentals do you disagree with? Because the last 166 days from the campaign, all we've heard about is further tax increases to finance more unaffordable spending.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Lots of speculation here, Speaker; lots of inferences based on fantasy, but again, I want to return to a very specific issue. I'm asking, again, my honourable colleague: Why is it that he feels that supporting horse racing in Ontario is of greater value to the people of Ontario than financing their schools and their health care, Speaker? To me that's a very clear

choice. It speaks to the right kind of choices and the wrong kind of choices. But I think, more importantly, it speaks to our values. I think we value health care and education more than we do horse racing, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's about making, as my honourable colleague says—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To me, Speaker, it's a pretty straightforward choice.

In our budget we'll continue; we'll lay out a number of those straightforward choices, where we take the next step in an important plan to eliminate the deficit. It's a five-year plan, Speaker. We'll do it in a way that protects our schools, protects our health care and continues to build a strong foundation for growth and prosperity.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, this is far from speculation and inferences. These are programs that you or your finance minister has announced. Pretty well any announcement you've made in the last 166 days has been about revenue increases and new unaffordable spending.

Premier, when I was in New York City last week, one of the things I was relieved to hear is a sense of growing optimism, albeit just starting out, when it comes to the global economy. And the view, Speaker, is more optimism about the country of Canada as a whole. But the concern I heard that was saddening and troubling is the growing concern and more questions being asked about the state of finances here in Ontario.

Premier, people can invest anywhere in the world, but if they don't think a government has its spending under control, they won't invest in Ontario, and you're pursuing policies that are making Ontario increasingly uncompetitive. While other countries, Speaker, are opening their doors for investment in their resources, they brought in the Far North Act and punishing energy rates. Premier, why are you punishing the resource sector in Ontario while other—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I gather my honourable colleague has visited New York City and, while there, he got a lesson in Economics 101. I'm glad he's had that opportunity.

I'd encourage him to take a look at the RBC Provincial Outlook just put out. It says, among other things, that Ontario will be experiencing "a modest rebound in growth in the province to 2.5% in 2012 from an estimated 1.9% in 2011."

Now 2.5% is not 5%, 6%, 7%, 8% or 9% that they're experiencing in places like China and India, but I think in the grand scheme of things it's a good foundation. We're clearly moving in the right direction. The way we're going to harden that momentum is through a thoughtful budget that is responsible, that makes the right kinds of choices.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier boasts about a modest rebound. That's the whole problem. Ontario should be the leader in Canada. We should be number one. We should be the best place in all of North America to find investment, to create jobs. That's what the Ontario PC Party believes in.

Premier, while you celebrate mediocrity, we want to see Ontario leading Canada again. We believe we should let markets work, let entrepreneurs, businesses and consumers be the ones who help markets grow. Cloud computing was not the result of some government grant. Apple did not become Apple because of government handouts.

Focus on the cost of regulation. Don't follow the European or American examples by overregulating the economy: another lesson clearly learned—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Tim Hudak: On Tuesday, will we see a change of course to get out of the way of business, get behind them and help them create jobs in the province of Ontario, and make us be number one again?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I say to my honourable colleague with the greatest respect that it's going to take more than that. He's talked about Apple. He's talked about cloud computing. He's talked about the regulatory environment. He's talked about the tax environment. But when confronted with a very sharply delineated choice—are we or are we not going to support the horse racing industry in the province of Ontario?—he struggles with that.

To me, it's a very, very clear choice. They're going to cloak it with every possible negative. The fact of the matter is, you knock on Ontario doors and ask families whether their choice is health care and education over horse racing, and they'll tell you 100 out of 100 times that they want good schools and good health care. That's the foundation for a good quality of life.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The lesson the Premier has failed to learn for nine years is that not every solution involves a tax increase here in the province of Ontario.

One of the other lessons that has been clear internationally—business leaders from New York to Toronto and North Bay will tell you how important it is to get the fundamentals right, like affordable and reliable energy, to make sure we can compete in the global economy. Energy development came up in almost every meeting I had in New York City, just like it does here, but not a single person sang the praises of massive taxpayer subsidies for solar panels or electric cars.

The Premier referenced Economics 101 a while ago. I was in Economics 101 back around the time that the FIT energy program was invented in Germany in 1991. It's

outdated; it's expensive. It's a failed experiment—the kind of European-style subsidies even the Europeans have moved away from.

Premier, will you reverse course and focus—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: On the matter of energy, again, we're making a very clear choice. We're not going to burn coal in Ontario. We've made that choice. Clearly, it is less expensive to buy coal from elsewhere, shovel it into a furnace in Ontario and create electricity that way. It is less expensive. That's their approach. That's not our approach.

Instead, we're going to be at the front of the curve. We know where the world is going. We know that, over time, the price of oil and gas will keep going up and up and up. The price of an—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am at the point of having difficulty hearing the response, but I will say that the noise is coming from both sides. I would appreciate the questions in silence and the answers in silence. Thank you.

Premier, finish.

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, in addition to the clear choice we're making not to burn coal in Ontario, and to accelerate a program that is building us an exciting new energy, we've also indicated that, as a choice, we're prepared to invest in full-day kindergarten, because that benefits all of our children today and it benefits our economy tomorrow.

HOME CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, in response to my questions on home care, your Minister of Health insisted that more people are receiving more care. If that's true, why are community care access centres telling us that they're cutting back hours and they are telling patients that they're going to be losing service?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the facts speak for themselves, Speaker: We have increased funding by 69% to community care access centres, an increase of close to 70% since we were elected in 2003. That's $2.1 billion a year more now than when we were first elected. We have invested tremendously in home care, but we do think there's more we need to do, because we do know that we still have people in hospitals who could be better served at home if they had stronger supports in the community. So as we move forward, as we implement our action plan, a big focus is going to be on further strengthening home care for the people of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I think that's the saddest response I've heard. They're plowing more money in, but the home care system is getting worse and worse and worse in Ontario.

You know, the government loves to make good-news announcements, and with the scandal at Ornge and the looming sunshine list that's going to be coming out tomorrow, shedding the light on big CEO salaries getting their pay hikes, I suppose that these announcements are going to come even more fast and more furious to cover up what's really going on. I suspect that that's going to happen; we saw it again today.

But for families who are more concerned about the real issues that they're facing—issues like the fact that they need to have home care so that they can avoid going into the hospital—the question is a very simple one: Why are community care access centres telling us that they're cutting back hours and telling patients that they're going to lose services?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, what I can tell you is that there is significant demand for home care. That is why we are making the choices we are making when it comes to improving health care. A very important part of our transformation plan, our action plan for health care, is about strengthening home care. It is about providing more care for more people. We are already serving close to 200,000 more people every year than when we took office. There are more people receiving more care—more hours of care as well. In fact, there are wonderful stories about people who were in long-term care who are now coming home with more robust supports than they would have had before. Our Home First program is proving to be a tremendous success as people in hospitals are coming home with those supports.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We know very well that smart investments in home care are a key way to prepare our health care system for the future. More importantly, they're a lifeline for people who want to stay in their homes, and can stay in their homes with just a little bit of support, a little bit of help. Now, the government knows this, too. So the question is, why does this government insist on sticking with a system that just is not working and still leaves people scrambling with missed visits, missed appointments, reduced hours and cancelled time?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: You know, Speaker, the member opposite and our government are on exactly the same page when it comes to this issue. We believe that there is more we can do to support more people in their homes. When we have someone in hospital who does not need to be in hospital but can't go home because there aren't supports, we know that we're not providing the best possible care, and we also know we're spending more money than we need to. So we are aggressively moving forward on expanding Home First, which is showing nothing short of wonderful results for people, and we welcome the support of the party opposite as we continue to strengthen home care.

HOME CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Michael Marsh lives in northeastern Ontario and needs considerable personal care. His mother is his

primary caregiver, but she's also a working woman who has to leave the house every day to go to work if she's going to be able to pay the bills.

Michael and his mother were recently told that their home care hours would be cut in half. The minister claims that more people are receiving more care. Can the Premier explain why this is happening to Michael and his family?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It is exactly stories like that story that drive us in our determination to do more to keep people in their homes, and there is significant support for our approach. Let me read a quote from the Ontario Home Care Association after I introduced our action plan: "The Ontario Home Care Association welcomes Ontario's action plan for health care. Presented by" the Minister of Health "today ... the plan sets an ambitious goal of making Ontario 'the healthiest place in North America'. Underpinning the goal is a commitment to relentlessly working to ensuring quality and accountability in health care."

People in the health community know that we're on the right track. We are moving forward as quickly as we can to strengthen supports in home care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A senior citizen in the northeast shared with us a very similar situation: She recently had a heart attack and is unable to get up and down her own stairs at home. Home care ensures that she can actually live in her home and get to her medical appointments. Her care has been cut from 13 hours down to two hours. Now, if this continues, she says she's going to have no option: She's either got to go to a nursing home or into the hospital.

If the government is investing more in home care, as they claim, why are families who rely on it telling us very clearly that they're going to be forced into hospitals because their support is being cut from underneath them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, it's not that we're claiming we're spending more. We are spending significantly more because we believe that we can care for people in their own homes. That is the best for them and it is the best for our system, because very often it is the lowest-cost service available, certainly less expensive than hospital and less expensive than long-term care. That is why we are relentless in our determination to strengthen home care.

We need to continue to invest. We need to get the best possible value for our health care dollars. Our health care system depends on us taking the action that we are proposing, because our future actually is dependent upon our success in this initiative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it seems to me this is a classic Liberal government way of delivering health care in our system: You spend a heck of a lot more, but you get a heck of a lot less.

Everyday families know that home care is a smart investment, and they know that it's going to improve our system and will improve people's lives. But after years and years and years of empty promises, we're hearing from family after family that is receiving less support, not more, and when they're forced into hospitals, we're all going to end up paying more.

Will the government commit right now to making the changes required in our home care system to make sure that it actually works for people? Or are they going to continue with the status quo that leaves people stranded, waiting for care or forced into hospitals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I cannot support the approach of the member opposite more. I believe—our government believes—that our big focus now has to be on home care, and that's why we're making difficult decisions in other parts of the health care system.

We're in an era where we have to make trade-offs. A 1% increase in what we spend on physicians, for example, can buy 30,000 home care visits. So we're making tough decisions because we know that home care is where we can get the best value for money and the highest quality of care for people.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. The minister's responses to our questions regarding the Ornge scandal have not been very encouraging, neither to us nor the public, and certainly not to the frontline staff at Ornge. We can only draw one of two conclusions: Either the minister has had a convenient lapse of memory, or she really did not know what was going on in her ministry.

1100

But there was one response—and it was on March 1—that is encouraging, in response to my question as to whether the minister would support the striking of a select committee. The minister responded, "I am fully supportive of any decision this Legislature makes. If it's the will of this Legislature that that happen, I will, of course, be totally supportive of that."

Speaker, I'd like to know from the minister: Will she be present this afternoon when we debate that motion to strike that select committee and will she vote in support of striking that committee?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community and Social Services, Speaker.

Hon. John Milloy: We're going to have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from St. Catharines will come to order. The member from Renfrew will come to order.

House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We'll have an opportunity to discuss and debate the honourable member's motion this afternoon, but it seems,

Mr. Speaker, that the opposition can't take yes for an answer. They've asked for hearings by a committee of this Legislature, and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts has agreed that on March 28, April 4 and April 18 they will have hearings into the Auditor General's report on Ornge. The committee meets on Wednesdays at 9 a.m. and 1 o'clock until routine proceedings, in committee room 1. There is an opportunity for that member and members across the way to go and to conduct the type of committee hearings and inquiries that they're asking for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: That has to be so embarrassing to the members of the government caucus. I can tell you, Speaker, my question was to the Minister of Health, and I asked if she would be in the House to debate that motion to strike a committee that she agreed she would support, and I specifically asked if she would vote in support of it.

We're all familiar with what the standing committee will do and the auditor's report, and we're also familiar with the police investigation. That's not the issue. We want a select committee so that employees, former employees and stakeholders of Ornge can come forward and tell us their story and tell us how we can restore confidence in Ontario's air ambulance service. That's what it's all about.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, if it's embarrassing to anyone, I'd say it's embarrassing to the member's neighbour there, the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, who is the Chair of the public accounts committee of this Legislature.

The public accounts committee is charged with reviewing the Auditor General's report. We'll be hearing from the Auditor General tomorrow. On March 28, April 4 and April 18, the public accounts committee, a committee of this Legislature, will have an opportunity to look into aspects of the Ornge situation.

I realize, Mr. Speaker, that the member asking the question is not a member of the public accounts committee, and far be it from me to interfere in their organizational aspect, but I'm sure if he asks the whip of the Conservative Party, he'll allow him to sub in for those hearings.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^me^ France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Beginning in 2009, Chris Mazza and other executives at Ornge, well, their salaries disappeared from the sunshine list. It turns out they were hiding sky-high salaries—over $1 million, Mr. Speaker—and the government was letting them do it.

My question is simple. On Friday, they will release the sunshine list. Will Ontarians see the salaries and the bonuses that were paid to the executives at Ornge for 2011?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, you know, the issue around Ornge is of course a very serious issue and one that is of deep concern to me and to members of this government. When we entrust people with a responsibility to deliver service to the people of this province, when we entrust them with taxpayer dollars, we expect them to live up to the responsibility that has been entrusted in them. In the case of Ornge, Speaker, we have been enormously disappointed with the leadership at Ornge. That is why we have taken the actions that we have taken to clean up the situation at Ornge.

We have taken decisive action. There is completely new leadership. There has been significant oversight and investigation of those parts at Ornge—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^me^ France Gélinas: Well, that was not the answer I wanted. I wanted a yes or a no: Will they be there or not?

But anyway, in 2010 the NDP filed a freedom of access to information request. We wanted an explanation: Why was it that the executives of Ornge were not on the sunshine list anymore? We got a response from the ministry that said that they would not release the 32 records explaining the hidden salaries.

While the government used Friday's sunshine list release to spell out the salaries at Ornge—I'm hoping that we will see the salaries for 2011, but will we also see the previous years? And will you finally release those 32 records that we requested in our freedom of access to information?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think members of this House are unanimous in their determination to understand what happened at Ornge and what we need to do so that it never does happen again. That is why we have taken the steps we have done.

Ornge did create for-profit entities. There was nothing in the performance agreement that gave us the power to prevent that, Speaker. That will change under the new legislation that I will be introducing shortly. I will include a component that will require ministry approval for the creation of new corporate entities.

We have lessons to learn from Ornge, Speaker, and we are learning those lessons and we are acting on those lessons.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

There's constant discussion in my riding and across the province regarding the relationship our government has worked to form with our cities and towns since coming to government. I know that our government understands that, just like other governments around the world, Ontario municipalities currently have to make difficult decisions about costs and services for their residents, and these decisions aren't made any easier by the extra costs

that have been downloaded onto municipalities by other governments.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please tell us what our government is doing to support our municipalities as we all face the harsh reality of difficult economic times to ensure that all Ontarians still have access to the municipal services that they currently enjoy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank my colleague for his question. He's got a lot of experience in municipal governance and he knows how important that provincial-municipal relationship is.

One of the first orders of business for us when we were elected, Mr. Speaker, was to work to repair damage done by the previous government to that relationship between the province and our cities and towns. The province's relationship with the municipalities has greatly improved since the days of forced amalgamation and downloading, and our government entered into a landmark agreement with municipalities. As a result, we've uploaded $2.7 billion of services from Ontario's cities and towns, which takes a huge burden off municipalities across Ontario.

Despite the province's economic challenges, we remain committed to the upload of municipal costs in accordance with the timetable agreed to through the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review. We understand how important it is. Social assistance cost $1.2 billion in 2012.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

1110

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister. I'm sure we can all agree that this is good news: that our government has made a firm pledge both to the province's municipalities and the uploading process. However, the government is committed to eliminating the deficit by 2017-18, and we all know that we have to make some difficult decisions.

Mr. Speaker, with this in mind, my question to the minister is: What is our government doing to ensure that the carrying out of these agreements the minister has referenced in her answer happens in the agreed-upon time frame?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What we did when we entered into these agreements, Mr. Speaker, was we put a very clear and defined timeline in place, and so that allows municipalities to know what to expect and to be able to better plan. I mentioned that $1.2 billion in social assistance benefit program costs for 2012. We're going to continue to upload court security costs, to the tune of $125 million. We've worked hard to ensure that our relationship is in good shape and is positive with the municipalities.

At the ROMA/OGRA conference in February, the Premier once again reaffirmed our government's commitment to our municipal partners, and we will continue to meet the promised upload of $1.5 billion per year in social service and court security costs by 2018.

We have put that timeline in place, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to upload, because we know that that's a critical component of our positive relationship with municipalities.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Minister of Health. As you know, the Auditor General's mandate is to review the value for the money you handed over to Ornge, and of course, the mandate of the OPP is to review any criminal activity at Ornge. However, neither is looking exclusively at the systemic operational failures or the concerns that have been brought forward by front-line staff about their personal safety and the safety of patients. This is why a select committee is necessary. There are critical questions to be asked and answered. It is absolutely essential that we restore public confidence, because that has been eroded every time the minister says that she doesn't know.

I ask the minister today: Will you show leadership? Will you be here for the vote in favour of a select committee?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I look forward to the debate this afternoon. I know that many members are interested in the outcome of the debate today. But I do want to underline that we've got a lot of activity going on right now. There is a forensic audit under way. The Auditor General, of course, will be releasing his report, and his report will be considered by standing committees. The OPP are conducting an investigation. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts, as we've heard from the House leader, will be looking very closely at the issue at Ornge.

Speaker, I will be introducing now legislation. I know that when that new legislation is introduced, if it is passed, in fact it will go to committee for examination. There will be ample opportunity to discuss all of the issues that are important to all members of this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, to the minister again: The minister knows that complaints about Ornge's operating practices have gone unheeded at the Ministry of Health, despite the fact that many concerns about patient safety have been raised by hospitals, nurses, paramedics and pilots since 2006. We also know that the Ontario Air Transport Association called for a review because they were concerned about the long waits for ambulances and the fact that that was compromising patient care.

So I ask the minister today: Are you prepared to show leadership, leadership as the Minister of Health, and vote to put patients and front-line workers first and ensure that patient safety is never again compromised by Ornge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, in my humble opinion, I have shown tremendous leadership on this file. We have new leadership in place. Their instructions were to put patient safety first. Patient safety is the number one issue, Speaker. It is the most important thing, and that is why we are going to be introducing a quality improve-

ment plan at Ornge. We are seeing the result that that approach is having at hospitals. When you measure patient safety, you can drive results to improve patient safety. That is why under the new legislation and under the new performance agreement, patient safety will be paramount.

I am focused on improving air ambulance service. I'm focused on improving accountability for public dollars. We're—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

The member from Toronto–Danforth.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Minister of Energy: Given the continued problems with the refurbishment of Bruce A nuclear—repeated delays, billions of dollars of cost overruns, radioactive leaks—will the minister make public the cost of refurbishing the Darlington nuclear reactors before committing billions of dollars to a project that we may not even need?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I thank the member for the question. We have had a long history in the province of Ontario with nuclear energy. I know the third party was in power when the Darlington facility was completed and opened. In fact, Tom Mitchell of Ontario Power Generation led the international effort to deal with safety issues that arose as a result of the devastating earthquake and tsunami in Japan.

We have approached the refurbishment of Darlington—it's necessary, mid-life maintenance that's very extensive—in a slightly different way to make sure that we get better price protection for Ontario taxpayers and ratepayers and we get a better sense of what costs are before we actually incur them. That's why the first stage of the contract was for extensive planning and design of the first of about seven parts of it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister, your answer is a red herring—a glow-in-the-dark red herring. You either don't know or won't tell the cost of that refurbishment. Why are you setting up Ontario families for another huge hike in their hydro rates?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: It's actually the opposite. We don't want the refurbishments to end up with the cost overruns or the time extensions that we've seen in the past around the world, so there's a fundamentally different approach.

The experience from around the world has told us that the more you do up front in terms of planning design, the better price certainty you get. You can estimate whatever you like for the price right now, but until they actually plan it out, in this case to 30-minute intervals, you don't get as much price certainty. When you get better price certainty, you have others bid for the best price on the next parts of the contract. It's a different approach—better protection for taxpayers, more certainty for both price and time.

MEDICAL RESEARCH

Mr. David Zimmer: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, and I ask this question as a former president of the Alzheimer Society of Canada.

It's estimated that brain disease and brain disorder cost our province $39 billion annually, and the annual international market for diagnostics and therapeutics is estimated to be about $130 billion—and that's growing every year.

Minister, what is Ontario doing to promote brain disease and disorder research and development in this area? It's a good opportunity for our economy and, more importantly, it's a good chance to offer hope to Ontarians who suffer from brain disorder and brain disease.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for the question. I can absolutely assure him that this province remains on the leading edge when it comes to research in brain disease and disorders.

Earlier this month, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and myself joined Joe Rotman and Dr. Donald Stuss at the launch of the Ontario Brain Institute's first of three research projects to be carried out at facilities across this province. The OBI's research projects will create and sustain over 80 research jobs in institutions across the province. Combining the talents of these professionals and the findings of their research, Ontario expects to reap even more economic benefit from the commercialization of the discoveries related to these projects.

Through the Ontario Brain Institute's research, we'll find better therapies for our children and our youth who are impacted by brain disorders and help them reach their full potential.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: It's clear that Ontario is, in fact, the leader in life research and is recognized as a key player in neuroscience research globally, and that's due in large part to the Ontario Brain Institute.

Minister, you said the Ontario Brain Institute was focusing on three research projects; you announced those earlier in the month. Will you tell me and this House and the people of Ontario what the details of those projects are and how the projects are actually going to be executed?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to share with the member and this House a little bit of detail on these projects. Dr. Darcy Fehlings and a team of 27 researchers from the University of Toronto will be working out of the Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital. They're going to be using technology similar to video games, where researchers will help children with cerebral palsy strengthen their weakened limbs and improve their quality of life.

The second project has the Province of Ontario Neurodevelopmental Disorders Network working with 27 researchers from Sick Kids, Holland Bloorview and

McMaster University working with children who have a number of disorders, like autism spectrum disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, among others.

Finally, Doctors Burnham and Burneo will be leading 26 researchers from Western, McMaster and the University of Ottawa. They'll be working on the Epilepsy Discovery Project. Lots of exciting things going on in Ontario.

LICENCE PLATES

Mr. Todd Smith: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, last week you announced a car tax. You couched it as a fee hike, but we all know that it's a tax. It's a way for this government to balance its incredibly poorly managed books on the backs of Ontario working families. This amounts to a 30% tax hike on every licence plate in the province of Ontario.

Just weeks after the Premier ruled out new taxes to pay for his big-spending ways, you come out and give us a tax with a slightly different name—the same tricks this government has played here since day number one.

Minister, will you, today, back away from your new plan to raise this car tax on every driver in Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss this in the Legislature today. First of all, the member should be aware of the fact that in New Brunswick, the fee to renew a licence plate is $172; in BC, the fee to renew a licence plate is $142; in Quebec, the fee to renew is $104. In Ontario, it is currently $74, and over three years it will going up to $98. That will be about the average that exists in all of the provinces.

The commercial rate has not been increased in 24 years. The automobile rates have not been increased for 15 years. This is extremely reasonable. It's being brought in over a period of three years and it's going to contribute to our having safer roads and bridges in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: So it is a car tax. It is a car tax, and the car tax appears to be okay, and this appears to fly in the face of what the Premier said just a few weeks ago: that he wasn't going to raise taxes in the province.

You know, when you brought in this new car tax, I went into some meetings with local small businesses—family delivery and trucking companies, and some taxi services—and those business owners told me last week during the spring break, when you popped this on them, that your new tax was going to drastically increase their cost of doing business and, in some cases, they even said they were going to have to scale back or reduce their fleets.

Minister, if you cost a single Ontarian their job, you should lose yours. I ask again: Will you renounce this tax-raising, job-killing policy and get your hand out of the pocket of Ontario drivers by getting rid of this car tax today?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Once again, I'm pleased to respond. We're the party that's putting health care ahead of horse racing subsidies. There are some tough choices that lie ahead, but unlike the opposition, we don't think that subsidizing permits for dirt bikes and snowmobiles is necessarily a priority.

We, on the other hand, think it's important to continue to eliminate the deficit and invest in our highways, roads and bridges, and that's why fees must more closely reflect the actual cost of providing various services.

The increases that have been announced are still very significantly less than cost recovery, which the provincial auditor is telling us we should be moving towards. So they should be thanking us for going modestly. The people of Ontario are being well served by these modest increases, which will provide money for our budgets that will help keep our roads safe.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Premier, in your letter to AMO President Gary McNamara six days before the budget, you promised more support for municipal infrastructure. I quote the Premier: "Ontario Liberals agree that there needs to be more predictability and accountability in our relationship with municipalities—and we are going to create a predictable and permanent fund specifically for municipal roads and bridges."

Now we hear that the province is cutting infrastructure support. Which infrastructure projects is the government planning on cutting, and how many jobs will this cost communities?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, I think I just answered a question from one of my colleagues about the good work that we've been doing building our relationships with municipalities—

Interjection: Uploading.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —and the uploading that we've been doing, taking those services, those costs, off the books of the municipalities, the towns and the communities and uploading them onto the provincial books: some $2.7 billion, and we continue to upload another $1.5 billion this year, 2012, of social costs coming onto the province's books.

We have been very, very clear, and we have made huge investments in infrastructure. My colleague the Minister of Infrastructure may want to comment on this, but we've made more investments in infrastructure since we've been in office than in a generation.

We will continue to make those investments, but the reality is that the uploading that we're doing gives municipalities more room to make these services available in their communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Mr. Speaker, a new casino built in downtown Toronto doesn't count as a comprehensive infrastructure plan.

The Conference Board of Canada estimates that each dollar on infrastructure spending in Ontario adds $1.11 to the province's real GDP. It's a good way to create good jobs and boost long-term growth. In last year's budget, the Premier promised infrastructure aimed at protecting 300,000 jobs. How many jobs will be lost from the government's plan to cut infrastructure funding this year, and which communities will be finding it harder to pay for roads, bridges and transit systems come April 1?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm just going to take a look at some of the investments that we have made. Let's look:

—Arnprior: upgraded water and pollution control centre—$5.3 million;

—Perth: revitalized Algonquin College local campus—$4.8 million;

—Norfolk county: rehabilitated County Road 42—$2.8 million;

—Grimsby: new west Niagara YMCA—$6 million;

—Pelham: reconstructed a two-kilometre stretch of Haist Street—$1.8 million;

—Milton: new arts and cultural centre library—$8.1 million;

—Sarnia: built Lambton College Fire and Emergency Response Training Centre—$4.9 million;

—East Ferris: East Ferris Community Centre—$1.2 million;

—Newmarket: revitalized Newmarket's historic downtown—$2 million.

Mr. Speaker, the list goes on and on. Add on top of that the $2.5 billion a year that we have invested in highways, roads and bridges—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

SKILLS TRAINING

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Constituents in my riding of Peterborough have been inquiring about the different programs that are available to help them increase their ability to find a good job. Most of them are adult learners who want to improve their literacy and numeracy skills so they can work toward their goal of a higher education and find a suitable job that will help them pay for their day-to-day expenses.

Speaker, these are hardworking Peterborough families. They are committed to supporting their families and communities. Our local economy thrives when these Ontarians have an education, a safe house and a good-paying job. In these uncertain times, our government needs to continue to help displaced workers and affected communities get back on their feet as soon as possible.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: How is the minister going to ensure that constituents in Peterborough riding have the basic skills training to qualify for better and rewarding—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

1130

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank my friend from Peterborough for the question. In the 2011 Ontario budget, we added $44 million in literacy and basic skills programs over three years. This was a remarkable investment. Being mindful and being prudent with the public purse, we deliver this through 223 agencies at 341 sites. We use existing organizations, community-based service providers, colleges and school boards. This allows us to deliver programs without additional administrative costs and to deliver those programs in almost every small rural community across Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Through you, Speaker, thank you for that very comprehensive answer, and I will pass this information to my constituents in Peterborough on how they can access the government's literacy and basic skills program to improve their reading and writing, math and basic work skills.

These programs help Ontarians learn what employers want in an employee, and help Ontarians identify those transferable skills that help them feel confident about themselves, which results in increasing their chances for re-entering the workforce.

Students in these kinds of programs will have an opportunity in classrooms to be a team player and feel more close with their class and their teachers. These students will return to the workforce with motivation and encouragement and passion. This will empower them to go the extra mile.

Speaker, through you to my friend the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: How is the minister going to ensure that the federal government continues to invest in the program—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's interesting, because our partnership with school boards and with colleges and the not-for-profit sector continues, but we have lost our largest partner, the federal government.

My predecessor, the member from Kitchener, wrote two letters to Minister Finley, without an answer. I have also written Minister Finley and have not received an answer. We now know that the federal government is withdrawing all of its funding from these programs and will be leaving us on our own with our community partners.

Right now, we have about 63,000 Ontarians in literacy programs. We understand that basic literacy is not only important to jobs and to participation in the economy, but as one person said to me, "When I learned how to read, at age 52, I read my granddaughter a bedtime story for the first time."

We know this is profoundly important to people's family lives, and I want to thank my predecessor for his leadership—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do remind all members to sit down when I ask you to.

New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Hanover Raceway is halfway to completion of a $9-million expansion project, the Carriage Hall convention and banquet centre. The Hanover, Bentinck and Brant Agricultural Society, owners of the raceway, had made this investment in consultation with the OLG, which is under your realm, Minister, and with certainty that funding from the slots-at-racetracks program would remain. With no warning, you ended the agreement and thus their ability to fund this project. As many as 220 jobs are now at stake. You're decimating our local economy; you're killing jobs.

Minister, will you immediately advise the Hanover, Bentinck and Brant Agricultural Society of your decision so that they can continue with this important community project and save rural jobs?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Given our current deficit situation, this government has to establish priorities. We have chosen to invest in full-day learning in your riding. We've chosen to hire more nurses in your riding. We've chosen to train more doctors who can practise in your riding. We had a full two-year—a full six-month consultation on this. We are no longer going to support the horse racing industry with $345 million a year.

A variety of groups were consulted—more than 50. It was well documented. As difficult as these choices are, our priority is with education, our priority is with health care and our priority is to get the budget balanced again. We simply cannot afford to subsidize the horse racing industry to that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary? The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Finance. My riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and our neighbour riding of Peterborough have been hard hit by higher-than-average unemployment rates. The loss of Kawartha Downs would have a devastating impact on this part of Ontario, where hundreds of people would lose their jobs.

This uncertainty you've created is causing problems now. The breeding industry is falling apart now. Veterinarians are losing their jobs now. Grooms, drivers, trainers and farmers don't know what their future will hold. I met a driver on the weekend who was turned down by his bank for a home mortgage because he was employed in the horse racing industry.

The member from Peterborough won't ask the question, so I will: Will you assure the people of my riding, the people of Peterborough and across the province that you will reverse this ill-thought-out policy which has created uncertainty for a key industry in the communities across Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we've announced portions of the land-based gaming review. We'll have more to say about that as Paul Godfrey—members opposite will know Mr. Godfrey; he's a well-known Ontarian, a supporter of their parties. We'll have more to say about new investments, Mr. Speaker. I know the member from Peterborough has been working very hard on some of those investments.

I regret that you're opposing this plan right now. I think you'll probably regret that fairly soon, because what we're doing is we're creating 2,000 new jobs.

That party, who two weeks ago said you shouldn't subsidize businesses, wants to keep subsidizing an industry with $345 million.

We're fixing it. We'll be making investments in rural—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HIGH-OCCUPANCY VEHICLE LANES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Taxis represent one component in a strategy to reduce traffic. They provide an alternative to taking one's car. When used with other forms of transportation, they can ease congestion.

Taxi drivers have raised a concern that when they use high-occupancy vehicle lanes, they are able to use them when they have a passenger but when they don't they often get stuck in traffic. My constituents have approached me, indicating the members of this government have committed to expanding HOV lanes to allow taxi drivers to use them. However, many of these promises were made on the eve of the election.

So my question to the minister is, through you, Speaker, will the minister actually commit to expanding the HOV lanes, allowing taxi drivers to use them and addressing the concerns of my constituents and taxi drivers across the GTA?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. Indeed, I have heard from representatives of the taxi industry, both in the GTA and in the Ottawa area. I have heard them out on a number of occasions. I have raised this issue with people in my ministry, and certainly, as we look at creating more HOV lanes across the province and looking at existing HOV lanes, there is serious consideration being given to that particular request.

I assure the taxi drivers and the taxi industry across the province that they are being given full attention by my ministry on this issue.

DEFERRED VOTES

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY GENERATING FACILITIES AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX, DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2012 / Projet de loi 34, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2012 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1143.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Take your seats, please. I would ask that the members take their seats, please.

The Sergeant-at-Arms is doing his job.

Thank you.

Madame Meilleur has moved second reading of Bill 34, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2012. All those in favour of the motion please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Hardeman, Ernie	Moridi, Reza
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Harris, Michael	Munro, Julia
Arnott, Ted	Hillier, Randy	Murray, Glen R.
Bailey, Robert	Horwath, Andrea	Naqvi, Yasir
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoskins, Eric	Natyshak, Taras
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Nicholls, Rick
Bartolucci, Rick	Jackson, Rod	O'Toole, John
Bentley, Christopher	Jaczek, Helena	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jeffrey, Linda	Pettapiece, Randy
Best, Margarett	Jones, Sylvia	Piruzza, Teresa
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Broten, Laurel C.	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Campbell, Sarah	Leone, Rob	Schein, Jonah
Cansfield, Donna H.	MacCharles, Tracy	Scott, Laurie
Chan, Michael	MacLaren, Jack	Shurman, Peter
Chiarelli, Bob	MacLeod, Lisa	Singh, Jagmeet
Chudleigh, Ted	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	Mantha, Michael	Sorbara, Greg
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Sousa, Charles
Coteau, Michael	Matthews, Deborah	Tabuns, Peter
Crack, Grant	Mauro, Bill	Takhar, Harinder S.
Craitor, Kim	McDonell, Jim	Taylor, Monique
Delaney, Bob	McGuinty, Dalton	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dickson, Joe	McKenna, Jane	Vanthof, John
DiNovo, Cheri	McMeekin, Ted	Walker, Bill
Duguid, Brad	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Duncan, Dwight	McNeely, Phil	Witmer, Elizabeth
Elliott, Christine	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wong, Soo
Fedeli, Victor	Miller, Norm	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Forster, Cindy	Milligan, Rob E.	Yurek, Jeff
Gélinas, France	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 99; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Minister.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted today to introduce representatives from the Ontario Co-operative Association, also known as On Co-Op. They are located in my wonderful riding of Guelph. In the gallery we have Mark Ventry, the new executive director—congratulations; and Peter Cameron. They will be holding a reception starting at 5 in rooms 228 and 230, and they would love to see everybody come and visit them. While you're waiting for the 5:50 vote, you have something to do now.

Mr. Steve Clark: There's been an Ottawa senator sighting here in the building today. Although he isn't in the chamber right now, he was in this chamber for 29 years. My predecessor, now-Senator Bob Runciman, is here today with Todd Smith, the member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JOHN NEWMAN

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is my privilege today to stand in honour of my constituent from Nepean–Carleton, John Newman of North Gower. On June 10, Mr. Newman will be inducted into the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame, a distinction that he is very deserving of.

John began to make his mark in farming when he and his lovely wife, Marion, purchased Jomar Farms in 1966. Just a year and a half ago, they celebrated a very important milestone. I actually caught them at a Michael Bublé concert and it was really nice to see. Of course, I was very excited to be there myself, because it was Michael Bublé.

Since then, their farm has been recognized for its excellence, including being recognized by both Kemptville college and the University of Guelph, which use their farm to teach students. John and Marion were further recognized with Master Feed awards for top stocker

quality and an OSCIA certificate for soil management and crop production.

John has offered more than just excellent farming in Ontario and Canada. Through the years, Mr. Newman has also taken on extraordinary leadership and communication roles within the beef industry. He served for several years on the Ontario Cattlemen's Association board and was integral in the process of restructuring the organization and implementing its new strategic plan.

In 2000, Mr. Newman became a founding director of the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency. When the BSE crisis hit the Canadian beef industry in 2003, Mr. Newman became a key spokesperson for Ontario beef. At that time, he became the chair of the Beef Information Centre, and his leadership over the next four years helped maintain Canadian consumers' confidence in Ontario beef. For that I am so grateful, as we all are in this chamber.

I know John and his wife are watching at home. On behalf of this chamber, John, we want to say: We salute you. We're proud of you. Thank you and congratulations.

AGNES MACPHAIL DAY

Mr. Michael Prue: Every year on March 24, the community of East York celebrates Agnes Macphail Day in honour of the first woman to be elected to the House of Commons in Ottawa and the first woman, also, to take her seat here in this Legislature.

This year will be the 19th anniversary of our celebration, and it will take place on March 24 between 7 and 9 o'clock at the East York Civic Centre. We will have wonderful entertainment from the East York Choir, now known as VOCA. The Agnes Macphail speaking contest winner, Haris Babar, will be giving her speech; she's a grade seven student. There will be an address by Jane Gibson and Barry Penhale.

Of course, the highlight of the evening is the award presentation. This year's winner is Alice Carriman. She is known in our community as the grandmother of Thorncliffe Park. She is a nurse, a mother, and throughout her entire life has spent time on education issues, health care, seniors and tenants.

Here are just a few of her accomplishments over the last number of years. She started the first breakfast club. She has planted gardens in the school courtyards. She crochets for homeless people. She started a Scrabble club to teach literacy to young people. She raises funds to subsidize field trips for those students who cannot go on them. She has after-school programs—the East York spelling bee was started by her. The tenants' association, Neighbourhood Watch, intergenerational programs and Scouts Canada—all from one remarkable woman whom we will recognize and honour on the 24th.

NOWRUZ

Mr. Reza Moridi: Today is a very special day. Today is Nowruz. Nowruz is the celebration of the spring equinox and usually occurs on March 21 or the previous or following day, depending on where it is observed.

Nowruz is commonly perceived as the most Iranian of all celebrations. Nowruz is widely celebrated in various Asian countries. It's also the official new year and the start of the calendar year in Iran, Azerbaijan and Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, Nowruz has been celebrated for at least 3,000 years and is deeply rooted in the traditions of the Zoroastrian belief system. The year 2012 marks 3,750 years since Asho Zarathushtra propounded his teachings to humanity. The core of his teachings, compiled in the Gathas, have brought us the earliest encouragements to strive for peace, social justice and the attainment of righteousness. These have been summarized in three phrases: good thoughts, good words and good deeds.

About 250,000 Ontarians from various ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, such as Iranians, Afghans, Azeris, Kurds, Zoroastrians, Baha'is and Ismailis, celebrate Nowruz every year.

Nowruz is also the rebirth of nature and can easily be celebrated by all the people in the world. I wish all Ontarians a happy Nowruz. May this Nowruz bring harmony, peace and prosperity to everyone around the world.

Remarks in Persian.

FINES

Mr. John O'Toole: I rise to inform Ontarians that we have a problem in Ontario with unpaid fines, much like the Premier has a problem with spending. This government has ignored the issue to the tune of $1 billion each year. That's right; according to the Ontario Association of Police Service Boards, unpaid fines already total over $1 billion. This number is growing each and every year.

Speaker, this problem undermines public safety, the rule of law and, in fact, accountability. It tells me that this government has chosen not to enforce the law. More tools and resources are needed for our local municipalities who administer much of the Provincial Offences Act. We need a proper information database so that one ministry of the government and another can cross-reference and make references to these fines. You would think in the 21st century, with computers and automation, that the government could get on with solving this problem. We need more carrots and more sticks.

Let's give an example: Why not provide some incentives here, like a discount for fines that are paid early? Or double the costs of fines that are paid late? The government must work co-operatively with their partners and the municipalities and the police around the province to get the job done.

I put it to you this way: Unless the Liberal government sets out to solve this problem in some deliberate way, it is doing nothing more than downloading to our municipalities.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, next week, here in this chamber, we'll be receiving the budget from the McGuinty government. All over Ontario, families are

waiting to see if their child care centres will get the funding they need to survive. Failure on the part of this government to put in place a good transition plan for us to go into all-day kindergarten has meant financial crisis for many child care centres. We face the closure of those centres.

For many single parents who are waiting for that budget, they know what they're facing is child care or welfare.

Once again, I take this opportunity to ask the government to put the funds in the budget so that our child care centres are protected, so that our families are protected.

1510

BUY-LOCAL POLICIES

Mr. Mike Colle: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you'd be surprised to know that recently, Ontarians crossing the border to Erie county—we know where Buffalo is—paid about $1.25 billion in sales tax collected in Erie county. The people in Erie county tell us that most of it's coming from Canadian shoppers.

This got me to think, Mr. Speaker: Why aren't we doing more to encourage people in Brantford, people in the Lake Simcoe region, everywhere, to shop and buy locally made products? Why do we always go to Walmart and buy products made in China? Let's buy products that are crafted, designed, made here in our own communities so we can keep Ontario jobs, we can reward Ontario entrepreneurship and ensure that our children have jobs in the future.

In my area of Eglinton–Lawrence, I have an amazing area called the upper Dufferin village, where we have shirt manufacturers that make Ontario-made shirts, believe it or not. They're in suits. They make Ontario meat products, like Katz's Deli that makes brisket that's better than any brisket you can get anywhere else outside of Ontario and Toronto.

So I just want to try and support this idea of: Buy locally and support your local manufacturing, your local entrepreneurs. You don't always have to go to Buffalo. Shop locally.

BRADY HESLIP

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Speaker, I rise to recognize a three-time all-star from Burlington's Nelson High School and a current guard for the Baylor Bears—Brady Heslip.

On Saturday afternoon, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Brady nailed nine three-pointers, lifting his team to an 80-63 win over Colorado and into the Sweet 16. Those 27 points were a career best. His nine three-pointers were just shy of the tournament record. It was the stuff of Hollywood scripts and highlight reels. It had him trending as the number one topic on Twitter.

He might come by it naturally. His father, Tom Heslip, was an all-Canadian basketball player. His uncle, Jay Triano, spent 11 years on our national team and is a former head coach for the Raptors.

But Brady leaves nothing to chance. His work ethic is just as amazing as his on-court performance. As a young boy, he practised relentlessly and now, as an honour student at Baylor, he hits the gym two or three times every day in the off season and reportedly makes 150 three-pointers before each practice. That dedication is the mark of a true champion.

However the 2012 bracket plays out, one thing is for sure: Brady Heslip is someone we'll be hearing a lot more of in the years to come. We're very proud to have him from Burlington, Ontario.

ONTARIO CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I would like to recognize the Ontario Co-operative Association, which is hosting its annual Queen's Park reception today to meet with members and to commemorate the International Year of Co-operatives. The United Nations proclaimed 2012 as the International Year of Co-operatives, and co-ops in more than 75 countries are taking part.

Ontario's 1,300 co-ops are holding events throughout the year to celebrate and promote the important role that co-operatives play in our economy. On January 12, I participated in a flag-raising ceremony at Guelph city hall and in the national launch of the international year, which involved an historic webcast and coast-to-coast celebrations.

Co-operatives are business enterprises owned and operated for the benefit of those using their services. They build sustainable communities and foster local economic development. Twice as many co-operatives remain in business after 10 years as other types of corporations. Co-ops work. The province's co-ops, credit unions and caisses populaires operate 1,900 locations in 400 communities across Ontario, serving 1.4 million members, generate more than $20.1 billion in revenue and employ more than 1,550 people. Guelph alone has more than 40 co-ops.

Please visit the co-op association's reception in room 228, and they'll tell you lots more about our wonderful co-ops.

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today with concerns about the changes implemented to the Trillium tax benefit and the impact this is having on families in my riding. Without any notice or consultation, the Liberal government implemented changes that affect Ontarians who rely on an income tax refund.

I've also heard from retirees in my riding who, out of necessity, are working to supplement their income. With two or more sources of income throughout the year, many end up owing income tax. In previous tax years, their tax credits could have been used to offset any income tax owing. This year, because taxpayers received no notice about the payment change for provincial tax

credits, seniors were unable to plan for the change and are struggling.

I'm also concerned about how this change affects the collection of child support payments. We know that the Family Responsibility Office garnishees income tax in an effort to collect arrears on child support orders. Because of the changes made this year by the Liberal government, the families who are owed child support may have to wait even longer for the money they are owed. Individuals with a garnishment order should have access to the lump sum payments as soon as possible. I would ask that the Minister of Finance make changes immediately to the Trillium tax benefit to ensure that families waiting for child support payments will receive money that is owed to them without any further delay.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated March 20, 2012, from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

Madame Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act to amend the French Language Services Act with respect to the French Language Services Commissioner's reporting requirements / Projet de loi 49, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français en ce qui concerne les rapports exigés du commissaire aux services en français.

M^me^ France Gélinas: Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir, en cette Semaine de la francophonie, de présenter un projet de loi qui s'appelle la Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services en français en ce qui concerne les rapports exigés du commissaire aux services en français.

It is my pleasure, Mr. Speaker, in this week de la francophonie, to introduce a new act that's called An Act to amend the French Language Services Act with respect to the French Language Services Commissioner's reporting requirements, and that it now be read for the first time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for un petit statement.

M^me^ France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur le Président. Bien, ça va être très court. Présentement, la Loi sur les services en français dit que le commissaire aux services en français doit soumettre son rapport annuel et ses rapports spéciaux à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Le projet de loi est tout simple : il amène un amendement à cette loi afin que le commissaire relève de l'Assemblée législative dans son ensemble. C'est tout. Merci.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LA FRANCOPHONIE

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je suis très fière de souligner à l'Assemblée législative que nous célébrons aujourd'hui la Journée internationale de la francophonie. Encore cette année, les francophones de l'Ontario, de l'ensemble du Canada et de toute la planète joignent leur voix pour exprimer leur fierté envers leur patrimoine culturel et linguistique.

Cette année, les célébrations revêtent une signification encore plus grande pour deux raisons. Dans un premier temps, l'Ontario fait face présentement à des défis économiques et budgétaires qui nécessitent une plus grande solidarité entre tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes.

The francophone experience is a good example of the mutual assistance and collective effort of which we are all capable. I believe that intercultural solidarity is a truly unifying factor that enables us to address together the challenges we are experiencing within government and in Ontario society as a whole, whose diversity is one of its greatest assets.

1520

Je tiens à féliciter mes collègues des trois partis politiques ontariens qui savent reconnaître l'apport des francophones à l'avancement social et économique de l'Ontario.

Ensemble, depuis l'adoption unanime de la Loi sur les services en français, il y a plus de 25 ans, les parlementaires d'ici contribuent non seulement au renforcement de la solidarité francophone mais à la consolidation de notre diversité culturelle. Je suis très fière de tout ce qui a été accompli.

Cette unanimité parlementaire est à l'origine de très belles réalisations politiques, gouvernementales et institutionnelles pour l'avancement des francophones.

On n'a qu'à penser aux écoles françaises qui connaissent un succès remarquable, aux services en français, aux services communautaires et de justice en français et au rayonnement de l'ensemble des institutions francophones partout en Ontario.

These are all achievements which this Legislative Assembly can declare a success. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all MPPs who have contributed to the advancement of francophones in Ontario.

Monsieur le Président, la Journée internationale de la francophonie est importante pour une deuxième raison. Cette année, le thème de cette journée est « Le français est une chance ». Je pense que ce thème est une belle occasion de réfléchir au statut de notre langue chez nous.

Au Canada et en Ontario, nous vivons des cycles où l'on a tendance à tenir pour acquis certaines réalités liées à la francophonie.

The issue of French language and culture, in a society as diverse as ours, remains a lifelong challenge from one generation to the next. But, yes, we are truly lucky to be francophone in such an open and tolerant province as Ontario.

Toutefois, il nous faut toujours et sans cesse travailler fort pour le maintien des droits linguistiques et des institutions francophones qui connaissent des succès en Ontario. Il s'agit d'un défi de tous les instants qui exige courage, détermination et vigilance.

Comme le dit si bien le secrétaire général de la francophonie, M. Abdou Diouf, dans son message d'introduction de la Journée internationale de la francophonie 2012, je souhaite que l'on continue de célébrer la chance d'être francophone.

Je le cite : « Savourons cette chance, non pas comme un acquis, mais comme un défi à relever jour après jour, comme un puissant moyen d'action, comme un formidable levier pour faire émerger une autre vision du monde et du destin qui nous lie, une vision acceptable par tous, équitable pour tous. »

Monsieur le Président, je termine en invitant chaque député à se joindre aux célébrations qui se tiennent dans leur comté cette semaine. J'invite également toutes les citoyennes et tous les citoyens de l'Ontario à célébrer la diversité linguistique dans notre province en pleine conscience de demeurer vigilants et constructifs lorsqu'il s'agit du fragile équilibre entre les droits de la majorité et le devoir de celle-ci de respecter les minorités fondatrices de notre pays.

Je vous invite tous et toutes à souligner la chance d'être francophone et la chance d'être solidaires dans cette riche diversité qui est la fibre même de l'Ontario moderne. Bonne Journée de la francophonie. Merci.

CO-OPERATIVES

COOPÉRATIVES

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased today to speak to you about our long-standing work with the co-op sector, and I join my colleague the member for Guelph in welcoming the Ontario Co-operative Association to Queen's Park today.

The Ontario Co-operative Association develops and promotes the entire co-op sector in Ontario. It's a resource and a common voice for Ontario credit unions, co-operatives and caisses populaires.

J'aimerais en particulier rendre hommage aux efforts qu'ils déploient pour veiller à ce que les Ontariennes et les Ontariens aient accès à tout un éventail d'options de logement abordable.

In particular, I would like to recognize their work to ensure Ontarians have access to a range of affordable housing options. As you may know, the United Nations has named 2012 the International Year of Co-operatives. The International Year of Co-operatives is raising public awareness of the invaluable contributions of co-operatives in reducing poverty, creating jobs and helping social integration.

Earlier this year, the Premier wrote that "co-operatives boast a proud history of enriching our communities, strengthening our society and building our nation."

As Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I'd like to recognize the work of the Ontario region of the Co-operative Housing Federation, which focuses on co-operative housing. Our government has a long history of working closely with the co-op housing federation in Ontario.

Nous reconnaissons l'importance du secteur des coopératives qui offre des options de logement abordable pour les familles de l'Ontario, et nous savons que la fédération déploie des efforts inlassables pour y arriver.

We recognize the importance of the co-op sector in providing affordable housing options for Ontario families, and we know that the federation works hard to help make this happen. We share the federation's commitment to maintaining a strong co-operative housing sector.

I want to acknowledge the unique nature of co-op housing that allows people to have an active role in the place that they live. I think that is really fundamental to the success of the co-op movement. Our government has always had a close working relationship with the federation.

For our part, we recognize the need for affordable housing and its role in supporting the growth and health of communities across Ontario. Housing, as everyone in this House knows, is much more than the buildings in which Ontarians live. Housing is a secure base from which people go to school, from which people find work, and that's why we developed a long-term affordable housing strategy. It's actually the first of its kind in Ontario.

The long-term affordable housing strategy supports our poverty reduction strategy and sets a strong foundation for a more efficient, accessible system for those who need safe, affordable housing, and provides increased flexibility for our housing partners to meet local needs in their communities. In other words, the money that has gone out as part of that affordable housing strategy has gone out in such a way that municipalities can work within a framework to meet the needs that they have identified in their own communities.

We've made, as a government, the largest commitment to affordable housing of any other government in

the history of Ontario. Mr. Speaker, last November the provincial and federal governments announced a combined investment of $480.6 million under the Investment in Affordable Housing for Ontario program. Members in the House will know that as the IAH program. This initiative will help to build or repair approximately 7,000 units of affordable housing over four years and will create 5,000 jobs in Ontario. The program builds on our record of providing $2.5 billion already in affordable housing—as I say, more than any previous government. This allocation will build and repair more than 270,000 units and provide 35,000 rent supplements.

Monsieur le Président, notre gouvernement réalise qu'un logement décent est bien plus qu'un abri. Il offre stabilité, sécurité et dignité.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, our government realizes that decent housing is much more than shelter, much more than a building. It provides stability, security and dignity. It plays a central role in reducing poverty and, as I've said, creates a strong base from which to find a job, raise a family, contribute to strengthening the Ontario economy.

Our government has made significant progress on our housing agenda. We'll continue to work with our co-op partners so they can continue to provide affordable housing options for Ontario families. I believe that together we're making a real difference in the lives of families around the province.

Mr. Speaker, we look forward to continuing to work with the co-op housing federation. We believe that the diversity of housing in Ontario is not complete without a healthy co-op sector.

I would just say, Mr. Speaker, that in addition to that work that we're doing with our partners in the province, we will continue to need a federal partner in providing affordable housing in Ontario. That's something that we have had. As I say, the $480.6 million that has flowed to communities around the province is a partnership between the federal government and the provincial government, and we look to the federal government to continue that partnership beyond 2014, which is the last date at which there is any of that money available.

1530

I'm also very happy to extend an invitation, as the member for Guelph did, to attend the Ontario Co-operative Association annual reception here at the Legislature later. The focus of the event is a very important issue that we should all support: building a better Ontario, strengthening communities, creating jobs and building resilience.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci, monsieur le Président.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M. John O'Toole: Je suis très heureux de me lever dans l'Assemblée aujourd'hui pour rendre hommage aux Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes pour l'identification du 14e anniversaire de la Journée internationale de la francophonie.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC opposition, I'm honoured to stand before this assembly to pay tribute to francophone Ontarians for their 14th anniversary on this International Day of La Francophonie.

Félicitations et merci.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup, monsieur.

CO-OPERATIVES

Mr. Steve Clark: I am pleased to rise in this, the International Year of Co-operatives, to speak on behalf of our caucus.

I, too, would like to join in welcoming members of the Ontario Co-operative Association here to Queen's Park for their annual lobby day. Thank you for the work that you do, and I look forward to meeting with you later and discussing some of the successes and legislative concerns that you have.

Speaker, I think it's important that we do take a moment today and recognize the tremendous range and breadth of co-operatives in Ontario. We've all seen, in our communities, this sector doing tremendously good things, whether it's a local credit union, a housing co-op or an agricultural co-op. But it's not until we take a step back and take a province-wide look at co-operatives that we truly grasp the important role they play in our communities.

Consider that there are more than 1.4 million Ontarians who count themselves as members of some form of co-operative. They account for over $30 billion in assets and employ a remarkable 15,000 people. When you come from a rural riding like I do, Speaker, in Leeds–Grenville, you really understand the amount of jobs that are really at stake.

It's important also to remember that the wages of those employees and the assets held by those co-operatives stay in communities and help make them stronger. In short, Speaker, they're a very invaluable and true component of our communities that enrich the social fabric of all Ontario.

I would like to, again, mention the fact that the United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed this year the International Year of Co-operatives, and I can think of no greater endorsement for the organization than receiving that UN proclamation.

Co-ops work because of their member-driven philosophy. It means that the policies and decisions that the members make are by members themselves and benefit those organizations. You know, I think Ontarians probably wish that we had that same influence on policies that the government put forward.

We all know that co-ops benefit sectors like agriculture, energy, child care, finance and many others, but as the minister noted, the most well known are co-op housing. Currently, in my riding of Leeds–Grenville—I

want to do a shout-out to two wonderful co-ops in the city of Brockville: the Brock-Seaway Housing Co-operative on Dana Street and the Shepherd's Green Co-op on Liston Avenue, two organizations that certainly, as a former municipal politician, I'm well aware of. If you've visited either one of those two 30-unit buildings, I think you would see a tremendous amount of vibrancy in those co-ops, and they add a lot to the neighbourhoods that they're in. It's an example that they're an essential part of a housing strategy.

I think the concern that many of them have is that there are now 122,000 people on not-for-profit co-op housing waiting lists in Ontario. I think we have the need that we need to look at in terms of improving organizations like the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. And in my part of the province, the Co-operative Housing Association of Eastern Ontario certainly knows that there are some issues that the government needs to deal with.

Today is a day, though, that we should be celebrating. But before we do, I just want to bring a couple of points. Recently, I've met with the Ontario region of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, and they've had a long-standing request of this government to move co-op housing tenure disputes from Ontario courts and into the Landlord and Tenant Board. It's surprising that, even though the government's given them every indication that they're favourable in moving this common-sense move forward, a move that would save countless amounts of time and money—yet they've been very frustrated that they've seen nothing happen from this government since the Legislative Assembly met again.

In closing, I just want to say that today's a time for us to celebrate the co-operative movement in Ontario, and again, I join in encouraging folks to visit their reception this afternoon.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M^me^ France Gélinas: Monsieur le Président, ça me fait extrêmement plaisir d'ajouter ma voix aux célébrations de la Journée internationale de la francophonie. Comme vous le savez, il y a quelques minutes, j'ai présenté un projet de loi dont, je crois, le temps est venu. Le temps est venu de donner à notre commissaire aux services en français, M. François Boileau, un petit peu plus de pouvoir que ce qu'il a. J'aimerais vous lire des lettres d'appui à cet effet.

En premier, de l'ACFO du grand Sudbury, qui dit : « L'ACFO du grand Sudbury croit que le Commissariat aux services en français devrait déposer ses rapports directement au Président de l'Assemblée, comme le font les autres commissaires, plutôt que de les déposer à un ministère. L'ACFO croit que l'adoption de cet amendement permettra une meilleure visibilité des services en français ainsi qu'un meilleur accès à ces services pour toute la communauté franco-ontarienne. » C'est signé « Joanne Gervais, Directrice générale ».

Également, un mémo de l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, qui nous dit : « L'AEFO estime … que le temps est venu de franchir une dernière étape pour assurer à ce poste l'indépendance et le prestige qui doivent revenir à un protecteur du citoyen. Nous croyons que l'amendement que propose le Nouveau Parti démocratique aurait l'avantage de dépolitiser la fonction du commissaire aux services en français et de mettre ce poste à l'abri de décisions de nature partisane. » C'est signé « Le président, Benoit Mercier ».

J'ai également l'Association française des municipalités de l'Ontario, qui nous dit : « Étant donné que nous considérons important le travail du commissaire, nous croyons qu'il est pertinent de modifier cette loi pour donner une plus grande visibilité au travail du commissaire. » C'est signé « Le maire du comté McGarry et président de l'AFMO, Clermont Lapointe ».

J'en ai d'autres. J'ai également la Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario, mieux connue comme la FAFO, qui nous dit que la FAFO « accueille favorablement le projet de loi … La FAFO ne peut que soutenir les initiatives qui renforcent le rôle du Commissariat aux services en français. Bien que l'Office des affaires francophones assume bien son mandat.… Le dépôt du rapport du commissaire aux services en français au Président de l'Assemblée législative affirme cet état de faits. » C'est signé « Olivia Roy », au nom de la FAFO.

J'ai également l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, qui nous dit : « L'Assemblée de la francophonie soutient l'initiative du Nouveau Parti démocratique de l'Ontario de présenter un projet de loi voulant que le commissaire aux services en français réponde directement de l'Assemblée législative, comme c'est le cas pour le vérificateur … »

J'en ai bien d'autres, mais je dois partager mon temps. Merci.

CO-OPERATIVES

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's a pleasure to rise today in recognition of International Year of Co-operatives, who play a huge role in communities across Ontario. About two million Ontarians are members of at least one co-op, and over 70,000 volunteer their time on co-op boards. We have many co-op housing units in my riding, and a well-respected and well-loved former MPP, Mel Swart, is—his name is in honour of one of those co-ops in my riding.

Co-ops exist in all sectors of the economy, and they are a way for communities to exercise control over the economic, social and cultural activities that affect the lives of community members. The NDP has a proud history of supporting co-operatives. Of course, our parent organization, the CCF, had a "co-operative" in its name.

We need to support greater involvement in the co-op movement, particularly in affordable housing. Unfortunately, the long-term affordable housing strategy is not

meeting the needs of 152,000 households in Ontario that are waiting for affordable housing. That number has increased by 18% over the last two years.

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The co-op housing association and thousands of members have urged the government to create an environment that encourages the development of co-operatives, allowing them to compete on an equal footing with other business enterprises, and this means updating the regulatory environment to enable them to be more competitive.

So today I would say, let's celebrate the contribution that co-ops make to communities in Ontario, and let's work tomorrow to take actions needed to support a thriving future for co-ops in Ontario.

I encourage all of my NDP colleagues to go out to the reception today at 5:30 before our meeting.

PETITIONS

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition on energy from my riding of Durham, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Solray Energy Corp. has given notice of its proposal for a class 3 solar power facility known as Epsom Solar Farm to be located in the township of Scugog; and

"Whereas the site is on prime farmland that has been in production for many generations; and

"Whereas we consider productive farmland to be of vital importance to farm and rural communities by providing healthy, locally grown food and ensuring the sustainability of Canada's food supply; and

"Whereas class 1 to 5 farmland and land that is zoned rural or agricultural should be protected from the current proposal and similar projects that may be considered in the future; and

"Whereas other sites of less value to agriculture are better locations for solar power developments;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature not to allow large, industrial solar farms on prime agricultural land, and we further express our support for giving local communities, through their elected municipal councils, the power to control and approve large-scale renewable energy" projects, wind or solar.

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Victoria, one of the pages.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario, and it reads as follows:

« Attendu que la mission du commissaire aux services en français est de veiller à ce que la population reçoive, en français, des services de qualité du gouvernement de l'Ontario et de surveiller l'application de la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que le commissaire a le mandat de mener des enquêtes indépendantes selon la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que contrairement au vérificateur général, à l'ombudsman, au commissaire à l'environnement et au commissaire à l'intégrité qui, eux, relèvent de l'Assemblée législative, le commissaire aux services en français relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario de changer les pouvoirs du commissaire aux services en français afin qu'il relève directement de l'Assemblée législative. »

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change the reporting relationship of the French language commissioner so that he reports directly to the Legislative Assembly."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Emily to bring it to the Clerk.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition from my riding of York South–Weston that is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and reads as follows:

"Whereas St. John the Evangelist Catholic elementary school in Weston is overcrowded, with 480 students in a school designed for 260; and

"Whereas the students will be relocating 40 minutes away in September 2012 during the duration of the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; and

"Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board has placed St. John the Evangelist third on the urgent capital priority list for 2012;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Respectfully request full funding to replace St. John the Evangelist school during the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; therefore, the students are not relocated twice."

I agree with this petition. I will hand it over to page Victoria.

TAXATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many Ontario residents have come to rely on receiving their full Ontario tax credit early in the year; and

"Whereas changes to the tax credit payment schedule were not widely publicized;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to reinstate the Ontario tax credit payment schedule utilized during 2011."

I agree with this. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Emma M.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: This petition is from parents in the Avalon Public School area of Ottawa–Orléans.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the current enrolment of Avalon Public School is 687 students;

"Whereas the student capacity of the school is 495 students, as determined by the Ministry of Education's own occupancy formula;

"Whereas the issue of overcrowding and lack of space makes it impossible for Avalon Public School to offer full-day kindergarten until the overcrowding issue is addressed;

"Whereas Avalon Public School is located in a high-growth community;

"Whereas the enrolment at Avalon Public School is expected to continue rising at a rate of 10% to 15% a year for the foreseeable future;

"Whereas the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has made building a new school in Avalon a top capital priority;

"We, the undersigned, call on the province of Ontario and Ministry of Education to provide the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board with the necessary funding to build an additional school in Avalon, to open no later than September 2014."

I agree with this petition, and I will send it forward with Nicholas.

EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTRE

Ms. Laurie Scott: The Beaverton community employment centre is due to close.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we are asking for intervention to reverse the decision made by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to close the employment resource centre in Beaverton, Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities of Ontario continue to fund, or find alternative funding for, the employment resource centre in Beaverton, Ontario. This is a vital service for Brock township and a centre point for social assistance in our community."

I present this to page Sharmeila and affix my signature to it.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a growing body of evidence confirming industrial wind development has serious adverse effects on host communities;

"Whereas over 135 people in Ontario have reported serious negative health effects from industrial wind development, and at least a dozen families have been bought out of their homes;

"Whereas Ontario's Green Energy Act has ended local planning control by stripping municipal councils of their rights;

"Whereas 80 municipal councils, representing two million Ontarians, called on the government to put in place a full moratorium on industrial wind development until an independent epidemiological health study is completed, proper environmental regulations and protections are put in place, and local democracy is restored;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately put a moratorium on all industrial wind proposals; fund an independent epidemiological health study to develop safe setbacks; legislate those findings; develop stringent environmental protection standards for natural areas; and require all projects to comply with regulations based on science and local planning."

I agree with this petition and will sign it and send it to the table with Alexander.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of the northeast, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making" PET scanning "a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario," with Health Sciences North, "its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through" Health Sciences North, "thereby serving and providing equitable access to the" residents of the northeast.

I fully support this petition, Mr. Speaker, will affix my name to it and ask page Victoria to bring it to the Clerk.

CELLULAR TRANSMISSION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition from some constituents in Oakville, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the operation of cellular commercial transmission equipment on new or existing cell towers has been proposed near residential areas in Oakville and other communities around the province;

"Whereas Industry Canada has ultimate authority to approve the location of cellular communications transmission equipment under the federal Radiocommunication Act;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has no jurisdiction in the placement of cell communications equipment or services;

"Whereas many area residents and local elected officials have expressed concerns with the location due to its proximity to residential areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada review the siting of cellular commercial communications transmission equipment in residential areas; and

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"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada place a moratorium on the installation of cellular commercial communication transmission equipment on new or existing towers within 1,000 metres of residential homes until an improved separation distance is established by the federal government."

I agree with this, Speaker, and, unlike some members of the opposition, will sign it and send it down with page Abbigail.

OPPOSITION DAY

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE
SERVICE D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENNE

Mr. Frank Klees: I move that it is the will of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that the McGuinty government call and appoint an all-party select committee to investigate and report on issues relating to Ontario's air ambulance system (including Ornge and its affiliates), addressing specifically, but not limited to, issues of patient and employee safety, management, oversight, governance and accountability mechanisms, and that anyone called to testify or report before this select committee be afforded whistle-blower protection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Klees has moved opposition day number 3.

The member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I want to begin this debate by setting out four goals that we hope to achieve through the establishment of the select committee being proposed by this motion and the hearings that will be conducted within the proposed terms of reference accompanying this motion. Our goals are as follows:

—first, to restore the confidence of the public, taxpayers, stakeholders and patients in Ontario's air ambulance service;

—second, to ensure that the safety of citizens and patients is the first priority of the air ambulance network by installing professional, dedicated service providers and by returning primary oversight of the system of our air ambulance service to the Ministry of Health;

—third, to address the problems created by the establishment of Ornge and the related for-profit entities, and to ensure that a similar incident can never happen again in any ministry of the government; and

—fourth, to establish strict controls over the strategic direction and daily operations of air ambulance by centralizing command and control within the Ministry of Health, and to ensure that effective oversight and accountability measures are in place.

Why is the establishment of a select committee so imperative to achieving these goals? I think, in order to answer that question, it's important to put into context the events that have led to the tabling of this motion.

Concerns were first raised about what was going on at Ornge more than a year ago. We heard from numerous past and current employees and contractors of service to Ornge who provided information to us concerning questionable business practices that resulted in the leveraging of public health care dollars to spawn a complex web of private, for-profit companies for the enrichment of a select few friends of the government. The standards and quality of service under the air ambulance services were progressively eroded, and patients, as a result, were put at risk.

Speaker, we brought these issues to the attention of the minister—did so repeatedly. The minister claimed for the longest time that she knew nothing about it. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the minister was questioned about Ornge during hearings of the Standing Committee on Estimates on November 16, 2010. The minister, deputy minister and the assistant deputy minister for direct services were questioned about the lack of salary disclosure, procurement policies and the role of the for-profit companies. Most questions at that committee were left unanswered, with the commitment that these issues would be looked into. Well, apparently they either weren't looked into or, if they were, nothing was done about it.

The minister was again warned about the questionable business practices at Ornge, the lack of accountability and the lack of oversight of this organization when I raised specific concerns on three separate occasions in the Legislature, on April 5, April 13 and again on April 21. Rather than act on the information we provided and the warnings that public health dollars were subsidizing the empire-building that was going on under the cover of Ontario's public air ambulance services, the Premier, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance insisted that Ornge was in full compliance with its accountability agreement with the Ministry of Health.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is that stakeholders have made numerous attempts to alert the government to the fact that Ornge was not meeting its obligations as set out in its agreement with the Ministry of Health. Those warnings were repeatedly ignored by this government. As early as July 2008, MPP Michael Gravelle forwarded a letter of concern to then-Minister of Health Caplan, who dismissed his concerns by simply referring the complainant back to Ornge itself.

Contrary to the insistence of the Premier, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health that all was well,

the fact is that the government received numerous warnings that standards of service were being compromised and that public health care dollars were being leveraged to spawn a web of for-profit companies whose boards were populated with friends of the government and, quite frankly, people who should have known better than to allow the abuse of public dollars. In addition to ignoring our call for an investigation months ago, the government's successive ministers ignored letters from stakeholders who provided first-hand information about questionable business practices that were becoming common knowledge within the industry among stakeholders about Ornge.

Following the government's refusal to act on our concerns regarding Ornge in April of last year, I met with the Auditor General and I conveyed to him copies of the letters and emails and records of meetings with present and past employees and stakeholders and suppliers of Ornge. I continued to pass along information as I received it, and we'll see the results of his findings when he files his report tomorrow. Speaker, I'm confident that while the government may have ignored our warnings, it won't be able to ignore the report that the Auditor General will file tomorrow. One of the many warnings about Ornge was contained in a letter sent to the Minister of Health on May 4, 2011, by the Ontario Air Transport Association—a five-page letter, Speaker, that speaks to the patient care that was being compromised, that speaks to many issues that were blatant in terms of transgression of the performance agreement that Ornge had with the government.

Suffice it to say that as we continued to receive information, we called on the Minister of Health to direct Ornge not to proceed with any of its planned reorganizations that were under way, including waiting until at least the government received the report of the Auditor General. That request was also ignored by the government.

Speaker, that's why we're calling today for an all-party select committee to be struck by the government in co-operation with opposition parties: so that we can get to the bottom of what has taken place. This is not about simply wanting to look to the past. We must learn from the past, and the only way that we can do that is by ensuring that we provide a forum for current and past employees of Ornge, who are professional men and women, dedicated to providing important emergency health services to the people of our province—giving them a safe place to come to tell their story.

Why is it important that these people come forward? Because they, too, will be able to provide us with advice in terms of how we can best restore confidence in our air ambulance service.

I challenged the minister this morning during question period to be here, to participate in this debate and to add her support to vote for the establishment of this committee. I reminded the minister that she herself, in question period on March 1, made a very specific commitment that if, in fact, the Legislature expresses its will to establish this select committee, she would support that. I asked her to repeat that again and, unfortunately, I sensed a backing off from that commitment.

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We will be watching the debate, as are many people across this province. Speaker, this is simply about ensuring that the important emergency air ambulance services of our province are restored to the point where patients can have confidence in the delivery of that service, where the front-line paramedics and pilots and front-line dedicated dispatchers and administrators in that service can once again be proud that they represent the air ambulance service of our province. We are looking forward to moving forward to restore that confidence.

We need that select committee to ensure that the truth can be found out. We need to hear from front-line people without intimidation, who have the protection of whistleblower protection so that they will not be retaliated against, so that we can once again celebrate the excellence of our air ambulance service in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you very much, Speaker. Do you know what? Often, when I rise to speak to an issue, I say how happy I am to be up speaking to a particular issue, to be joining the debate. But, Speaker, it brings me no pleasure to be standing in this place on this issue yet again.

There's only one reason why we're here: We're here because we owe it to the people of this province to do right by them when it comes to uncovering all of the information that needs to be in the public eye when it comes to Ornge and the air ambulance system. I say that, Speaker, even knowing that there are other efforts under way, even knowing that tomorrow there will be a report tabled by the Auditor General, even knowing that there's an OPP investigation under way in terms of the potential criminal activities that may have occurred at that organization.

Speaker, the reality is that we are about to see, at the end of this week, the sunshine list unveiled in the province of Ontario. We know that there was a person who used to show up on the sunshine list, or at least a position that used to show up on the sunshine list, for a number of years, and then all of a sudden that person's name no longer appeared. That was the person who was the head of this organization called Ornge. The CEO, Chris Mazza, suddenly disappeared from the sunshine list in 2009. In 2008, he was making $300,000. We heard nothing in 2009, nothing in 2010. We don't know if he's going to show up on the 2011 list or not. We're all waiting anxiously to see that list on Friday.

It turns out that in those years where he just happened to not be listed, he was making $1.4 million. It went from $300,000 to $1.4 million, and that doesn't include all of his perks, all of his cushy trips all over the world, his private gym, his private chef, his mortgage, the loan to buy his own personal home. None of that was reported because, all of a sudden, Mr. Chris Mazza, the CEO of the day of Ornge, wasn't on the sunshine list.

Speaker, this was not something that went unnoticed. This is something, in fact, that was raised by MPPs. It was raised by former leader Howard Hampton, that the sunshine list all of a sudden didn't have the Ornge executives included on it.

So the question is, why, when this issue was raised, did the government simply ignore it? Why did they turn a blind eye to that situation? Why did they sweep under the carpet the very real criticisms that have been coming up time after time after time for a number of years, only one of which I just mentioned an example of? And that's only one. There have been a number of issues raised over the last several weeks recalling some of the concerns that have been voiced, not only by MPPs but by past employees and by others—by current employees, frankly. Yet the government, year after year, simply closed its eyes, simply didn't want to hear, didn't want to look into it, didn't want to bother—I don't know—didn't want to rock the boat, didn't want to anger their friends. I don't know, Speaker. It seems like that's the case to us.

That is why it's so important to have this select committee struck. We need to know who knew what and when across the way there. Who in the government knew what was going on?

What we know already for sure is that there was a time not so long ago, in January 2011, when in fact an actual report was given to the Premier's top advisors and to top officials in a number of the ministries. Incredulously, again, nobody noticed or nobody took any notice whatsoever that there was a potential problem here. That came in 2011, after a couple of years of flags already going up, and yet documents provided to the top people in the government and the top people in the Liberal offices—they think it's funny over there, but I don't think it's funny at all—in the Premier's office, the top people received a document that should have set the alarm bells ringing. Right? It should have set the alarm bells ringing when private people were profiting from leveraging our tax dollars, particularly our health care dollars, for their own private good, to line their own pockets.

But I guess because the report and the briefing came from the former president of the Liberal Party of Canada, everybody had to take a hands-off approach. It's obvious it's got to be something good. If it's not good for the taxpayers of Ontario, if it's not good for the people of the province, at least it's very good for the Liberal insiders.

This is a movie that we have watched year after year after year with this government across the way. We watched it with the Collegate scandal, right? We watched it with eHealth, and we're watching it once again with Ornge. I suspect that it's happening in a whole bunch of other places, whether large scale or small, and we have to put a stop to it. We cannot tolerate this kind of lack of accountability, this kind of lack of transparency and this kind of lack of acknowledgement by a government that's simply wasting our most precious resource, which is our tax dollars and, more specifically in this case, our health care dollars.

It is unacceptable, and it's not just unacceptable to me, Speaker. It's unacceptable to every single person taking up a seat in this Legislature, and I dare say it should be unacceptable to everybody on that side of the House as well.

There are a number of New Democrats that are going to speak to this motion. I'm really pleased that it's here in front of us, finally. The question has come: Why? Why bother with a select committee? There is an investigation already. There is an auditor's report already. Definitely, that's the case, but a select committee can undertake all of the things that are indicated in this motion, and the member who brought the motion forward has very clearly stated what the purpose of the select committee is. It's not only to find out exactly where the holes were and why they were allowed to exist in the first place, but also to make sure that this never happens again, and that if it is currently happening again somewhere else within this government's regime, that it's stopped and it's stopped immediately. That's what the purpose of this committee is.

I think we all owe it to the people of Ontario to have at this issue in the most open and most transparent way. Wouldn't that be a breath of fresh air breathed into the whole Ornge mess? Because that's the only way the people of this province are going to feel confident not only about Ornge as an organization, but about the ability of governments to actually do the right thing, to do the honest thing and to do right by the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'd like to begin by talking a little bit about my experiences with select committees because the only select committee that has happened in the experience of the vast majority of people sitting here is the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addiction. I think we all agree that that select committee worked very, very well. All three parties supported the report that was ultimately produced, and the stakeholders in the mental health and addiction field also supported the work that the committee did.

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I think it's useful to go back and look at why did it succeed. The first thing, and maybe the most important thing, was that when we started, all three parties—every single member of the committee—agreed that the purpose of the committee was not to assign blame, that looking at who should have a fault assigned to them was not on the agenda of the select committee. In fact, we specifically agreed that our only agenda was to figure out how to fix the problem, how to improve the mental health and addictions system. It was certainly true that that was the intent of the member from Whitby–Oshawa when she suggested the select committee. It was certainly true of Minister Caplan when he brought the motion to create the select committee, and in fact it was in concert with his expert advisory committee, which was doing similar work. Everybody worked together. Everything we did,

we achieved by consensus, and it was a very successful select committee.

But that's not what's going on here, Madam Speaker. We've spent the last three months with both parties opposite looking at how to assign blame. In fact, the official opposition has called for the resignation of the minister no less than 13 times up to March break. I didn't count to see how many times they did it this week. The member for Newmarket–Aurora, who has proposed the select committee, just spent most of his time telling us how we needed to assign blame. The leader of the third party has just spent time telling us how we need to find time to make sure we have the right people to blame. That's not how you get a select committee to work. The people on that side want to have an exercise in politics where we assign blame. The people on this side of the aisle, the people in the government, want to solve the problem, and we are not going to want to participate in a political game of playing politics with patient care. We are fixing the problem, and that's what we're going to focus on.

I think it's worthwhile to note that there are a lot of things already being done, a lot of things where there are already investigations. So let's just have a little bit of a look at what is already in progress.

First of all, the Minister of Health sent the Ministry of Finance's forensic audit team into Ornge and said, "Find out where the money went that we gave from the public accounts to Ornge. What happened to the money?" The preliminary report that the minister got back was very disturbing, and she immediately turned it over to the Ontario Provincial Police for investigation to find out if there is any criminal wrongdoing involved—which is exactly where that investigation should be—and the forensic auditors continue to do work.

The Auditor General began looking into air ambulance service in Ontario as part of his routine audit. In fact, he looked at air ambulance several years ago, and this was just coming back in the normal rotation. He wanted to look at air ambulance again, and obviously there had been significant transitions. It didn't become part of his regular report because he found out he was being stonewalled. When the minister found out what was going on in terms of being stonewalled, she supported him working with the forensic audit team, and the forensic audit team sharing information and working in concert with the Auditor General.

The Auditor General will in fact table his report tomorrow, and I'm sure we're all looking forward to finding out what the Auditor General has found out. Knowing that the Auditor General will table his report tomorrow, public accounts has already had a discussion, and all three parties have supported beginning public hearings on the auditor's report on Ornge next week, March 28. Anybody who wants to come, anybody who wants to tune in, is invited and—

Interjection.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I said is invited to attend and watch and see what's happening, and we've agreed that there will be hearings going on for three weeks, and people can invite witnesses. It isn't that we're just going to talk. We've already agreed that we will have other witnesses. So if the parties opposite want to invite other witnesses, they are perfectly free to do so. I heard this morning that they want to invite people from the front lines to talk about their experience. Well, I'm sure that that will overlap with some of the topics that the auditor has raised. They're free to do that.

Mr. Frank Klees: Will the minister come?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: If you wish to invite her, I'm sure we can deal with that. But instead of wasting time playing politics, maybe you should pay attention to the process of public accounts, which is a serious process and is one whereby, quite frankly, Madam Speaker—and I know you've spent some time on public accounts—ultimately we do come to consensus. That is the history of public accounts. We did many hours of hearings on eHealth. We even came to consensus on eHealth. We need to fix the problem.

Of course, the other thing that is going to happen, as the minister has said, is that she will be tabling legislation tomorrow and releasing the new performance agreement, and we will be able to have committee hearings on that legislation—another opportunity.

So there are a lot of opportunities; a lot of good things have happened. The select committee and political gamesmanship is just not necessary. There are so many other things already happening to fix the problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm really very pleased to join today in the opposition day motion that has been put forward by my colleague Mr. Klees which does call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to appoint an all-party select committee to investigate and report on issues relating to Ontario's air ambulance system.

I want to begin by acknowledging the diligence, the persistence and the hard work of the member for Newmarket–Aurora. I remember when the member first raised the issue nearly a year ago. At that time, the government was quick to brush off his concern and refused to answer the questions that he has posed in any meaningful manner. So I commend the member for working so hard on behalf of the patients and taxpayers in this province to make sure that we address the unacceptable practices and policies at Ornge.

Madam Speaker, as the Ornge scandal continues to evolve—and I say "evolve" because each day there are new revelations—it becomes ever more complicated, confusing and sadly disturbing. To think that in this day and age in Ontario the kind of deception practised by the management at Ornge was allowed to take place and was ignored by this government—it was totally unacceptable.

It has permeated like a cancer throughout the highest levels of the organizational hierarchy and throughout the government. But do you know what is most disturbing? It has occurred at the direct expense of the safety of the front-line workers and patients.

We know that the Ornge saga is far from over. There continue to be employees and former employees who want to share their stories and their experiences because they don't want the risks that were suffered by patients to ever occur again. These people tell us about routine, detailed business practices that were intentionally designed to mislead and deceive. They describe how their warnings went unheeded and were simply ignored by the ministry.

What's clear is that the government allowed this to carry on, never once stepping in and exercising the authority and oversight it was provided with in the original performance agreement.

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As the Ornge scandal has evolved, we've learned that serious and significant operational gaps in service have detrimentally affected the level of service provided to patients. The decisions of those at Ornge and in the minister's and Premier's offices have compromised patient and crew safety. We know that the coroner's office is currently investigating a number of incidents involving an air ambulance in patient deaths. We know that Ornge helicopters have been grounded for over 47,000 minutes in the past three months alone due to a shortage of pilots and paramedics. We know that patients, including newborn children, have waited hours for an ambulance. We know that the interiors of the helicopters are not conducive to allowing paramedics to perform CPR, the most basic lifesaving procedure available to them.

Madam Speaker, these operational gaps have had an immense negative impact on the quality and accessibility of care made available to patients. These operational deficiencies have jeopardized the integrity of this great Ontario air ambulance service. It is inexcusable, and those responsible need to be held accountable. It is yet one more reason why we must strike a select committee. We must restore public confidence in our air ambulance service.

As we look forward to the future, we need to acknowledge that this government has failed in its responsibilities to provide oversight. So today we are having this debate about whether the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the representatives who have been elected by the people of Ontario to safeguard the public good and protect the public trust, believes that an unprecedented level of deceit and corruption at an organization owned and funded by taxpayers necessitates the striking of an investigative committee.

Today we have an opportunity to stand up for patient safety. We have an opportunity to make sure that those who have stories to share have an opportunity to do so. There are nurses, patients, pilots and paramedics who are looking to us to strike this all-party select committee in order that they can provide additional information which will ensure that this will never happen again in the province of Ontario. They want to ensure that no more patients are ever put at risk, they want to ensure that there is effective oversight of our air ambulance service, and they want to make sure that our once-great air ambulance service is restored and held in the confidence and trust that it was in the past.

So I ask the members across, vote today to make sure that public confidence in our air ambulance service and the men and women who work there can be restored.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Let me begin by thanking the member for Newmarket–Aurora for bringing about this motion today. I think it's vitally important to instilling some confidence back into this House and some transparency as to what happened—exactly what happened—at Ornge and how we move forward.

I also want to thank our leader, Andrea Horwath, for adding her comments to the debate today. She prefaced her remarks by saying that she takes no comfort—or she really did not enjoy being here to speak about this, because it is such a difficult issue, and it is quite sad.

I, on the other hand, am very happy to be here to debate this issue and to talk further about some of the issues that arose under the government's tenure and under the government's watch when it came to delivering air ambulance service to Ontarians. I'm happy, Madam Speaker, because perhaps there is not one other issue in my riding that members want me to focus on in terms of bringing about accountability and transparency from this government. I think they realize that the decision to wash their hands from any responsibility when it came to delivering this service put lives at risk, ultimately. Of course, the lack of oversight and the waste of dollars is bad enough, but when we see patient care being compromised, and we see a service that certainly isn't living up to the standards that we would expect in this province, that really goes to the fundamental lack of ability of this government to handle such an important issue.

Perhaps I'll go back to the beginning of Ornge air ambulance and how this scheme was conceived. You know, there was quite a brain trust that was involved in this. We had insiders of the Liberal Party who were brokering deals, working the legal framework, which should have set off some alarm bells from the outset, from the beginning. When you have the Liberal Party president involved in government operations, building a network of for-profit entities under the guise of a not-for-profit service delivery model—who on that side brought any common sense to the table and said, "You know, this could come back to bite us at some point"? Evidently, no one.

So all the more reason that it is fully justifiable to strike a select committee. I think the large, vast majority of Ontarians want us to focus solely on this issue, and not to allow any other potential issues, permeate through the committee on government affairs—what is the committee again?

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The public accounts committee. I think it is the right thing to do, and I know that our party is entirely supportive of it.

Again, back to the beginning, where the minister at the time was involved in this scheme: Perhaps we could take

some quotes from what his opinion is on it today and some other quotes from newspapers.

In a letter to the Toronto Star, the former health minister and Liberal MPP, George Smitherman, says that the controversy at Ornge is that "Ornge acquired a new head office; Ornge paid a whopping salary to their CEO; and Ornge pursued private sector business opportunities. In the matters that are central to the Star's investigation, it is very clear that these activities occurred following my five years as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care."

We see one of the largest passings of the buck that I think has happened in this Legislature. On one hand, we've got the former minister, who conceived the deal, passing it along to his successor; his successor washing his hands of it; and now the current member bringing it back to the original minister—the dog chasing its tail there, with no one wanting to take responsibility.

We've only heard one submission from the government side today in regard to our request for a select committee to be struck. To compile what was said already and to condense it, it was a series of excuses. There was no admission of responsibility, something that we've called for from the outset—another series of excuses as to why the minister acted, why she did not act, the stonewalling that was put up. Aren't you the government? Don't you have the ability to bust through stone walls? Do you have no power whatsoever? You were a majority government at that time. You would think that you could have put a full stop to the activities that were happening at Ornge. Yet it was status quo. They were left to their own devices, and lots of people got rich.

In fact, people, apparently, hopefully, got smarter, because we were paying for their MBAs. Some people got an education out of this too. What a slap in the face to Ontarians. What a slap in the face to students who are struggling today to pay for their post-secondary education. What are you telling them? "Come to the dark side, and somewhere along the line, we could potentially get you an MBA."

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Actually, it wasn't open to just anybody; these were family members who rose through the ranks that Ornge was paying for their MBAs. In fact, up to $600,000, we now know, was spent from 2005 to 2011—$600,000.

I see the Minister of Finance laughing. I don't know if he's giggling at the figure, but it's quite sad.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's an embarrassment; it is a total embarrassment.

Here's one that should shock anyone: Ornge's charitable arm partnered with New York-based Orange County Choppers. You guys see them on TV, OCC, Orange County Choppers. Do you know how much one of those motorcycles is?

Interjection: Too much.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Too much. Maybe $150,000? I would think it's getting close to that, indeed. And I like that show, actually. It's quite a neat show. But you'll see large corporations use these as promotional entities, right? You'll see DeWalt drills and other entities build a nice bike and roll it out there to promote their business. What did Ornge need to promote? Why would a $150,000 motorcycle be justified as an expense?

Mr. Frank Klees: Two motorcycles.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Two of them. What were you selling? Were you saying, "Hey, we're the only air ambulance service in town. If you're ever in an emergency, we've got a helicopter that may get you there. We've got fixed-wing airplanes that can't fly you into the United States if you need care, but we've got this beautiful shiny new motorcycle here." It makes no sense whatsoever. It's one of the more disgusting aspects of what happened at Ornge. To our opinion, those on this side of the House that I think are offering some much-needed common sense, I think it's one of a whole host of issues that justify the striking of this select committee.

I certainly look forward to playing a part on that committee, not only because I think it's the right thing to do but because the people of this province are demanding it to happen. I will be quite interested to hear some more submissions from that side, because every day that they neglect to take responsibility is a day that they get deeper and deeper into the hole that they've dug.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to speak to this. I'd like to speak to some of the process issues here first. But before I do that, let me just say on the record that the Minister of Health, Minister Matthews, since this issue came to the attention of the House, has in my judgment left no stone unturned to get to the bottom of this.

Laughter.

Mr. David Zimmer: Now, you may laugh. You may laugh, but the minister has left no stone unturned to get to the bottom of this.

Here are the facts; here's what the minister has done since this issue came to the attention of this Legislature. She in effect has got four, or will soon have four, investigations or reviews going on. The first thing she did was call in the Auditor General. The Auditor General has been working on his report, and his report will be presented to this legislative body tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, I urge you to—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

Mr. David Zimmer: Thank you.

She called in the Auditor General. The Auditor General has been doing his work. She's called in the Ontario Provincial Police, and they are doing a criminal investigation. What can be more serious than a criminal investigation? That criminal investigation is ongoing, and in due course we'll receive their report. That's two initiatives that are under way.

The fourth initiative that is under way is that the public accounts committee met on March 7, about two weeks ago, 10 days ago, and the public accounts committee has agreed that, on receipt of the Auditor General's report tomorrow, at the public accounts

committee's next meeting we will schedule hearings of the public accounts committee into the various matters raised by the Auditor General's report. Those hearings are going to commence on March 28 and they're going to continue for a number of days.

Now, what's interesting that the public accounts committee has undertaken this responsibility is that the public accounts committee is composed of a Chair of the committee, who is a member of the official opposition, and it's composed of three Conservative members, two NDP members and four Liberal members. So the opposition parties not only have the Chair of the public accounts committee, but they've also got the majority vote on that public accounts committee.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, they don't. It's a tie vote.

Mr. David Zimmer: There are three Conservative members and two NDP members. That makes five—

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Chair doesn't vote.

Mr. David Zimmer: That makes five, and there are four Liberal members and there's a Conservative Chair. The opposition parties are well armed to take that committee in whatever direction it wants to. They've got the chairmanship and they've got the majority on the committee.

The next thing that's happening is, I understand the minister is introducing legislation as early as tomorrow to deal with and to reform the way Ornge operates. What the members opposite have conveniently forgotten is that once that legislation is introduced to reform, essentially, the way Ornge does its business, that proposed piece of legislation will eventually be referred to yet another committee, and that committee will conduct a review of how the proposed legislation intends to deal with the Ornge issue. I expect that in the process of doing that, they'll be reviewing some of the history of Ornge. So that's where we are today.

Now, the official opposition is asking for a select committee. I think that the better process here is to let those four investigations or reviews complete their work: the Auditor General's report, which will be completed tomorrow; the OPP investigation, which will be completed in due course and come up with its recommendations regarding criminal wrongdoing, if that's the case; the public accounts committee will start its hearings on March 28, and that will go on for several days—again, I point out that that committee's chaired by a member of the official opposition and the opposition parties hold the majority of votes on that committee, so they will no doubt steer that committee as they see fit; and then the legislation, which will be introduced tomorrow, I'm informed, will go to committee, and that committee will conduct hearings. So when those four reviews or investigations are completed, then, I think, it behooves the opposition at that time—not now—to look at the findings of those four reviews or investigations, because what comes out in the Auditor General's report, the OPP, the public accounts committee and the legislative committee that's looking into the legislation may well better inform what this House may want to do or not do in terms of setting up a select committee. So it's a matter of process.

There's a principle in law generally that when you've got an issue that you're looking into and you've got several entities charged with the responsibility of looking into a matter or reviewing it, you let each of those entities that have a responsibility complete their work, and when they've completed their work, you've got the four reports in front of you, you consider all of their findings in their totalities and how each finding relates to another, and then sit back and take a responsible and a mature decision whether to proceed with yet a fifth review of this by way of a select committee.

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But I think the better—in fact, I submit that the better process is to let those four committees do their work. This Legislature will then have the benefit of informing themselves what's contained in those reports, and then we can proceed in a more balanced and mature way to decide whether we're going to proceed with a select committee or not.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The problem with the previous speaker is that we already know that the system is set up to prevent all the information from coming to the floor, and that will not happen under his proposal. The only way that will happen is with a select committee.

But I would like to say a few words about the highly skilled people who work at the operational level of Ornge: highly skilled helicopter pilots, fixed-wing pilots, highly skilled EMS workers, highly skilled engineers who keep the planes flying, dispatchers. These people want to do a good job. They're highly skilled, they're very intelligent, and they're going through a very difficult time. And I say to them, if they're watching: Hold your heads up high; you are not the ones who are creating these problems. This is a problem that comes from the government, that has started at the top of that organization and has eventually, at this point in time, been shown to be the real problem. This is not about the employees of Ornge; this is about the management and lack of oversight. People have wondered why Ornge is spelled funny. The "a" stands for accountability, and it's been left out of the name, and therein lies the problem.

A select committee will dig into the process and find out the hows, the wheres, the whys, the whats, and who knew what when. Those are the kinds of questions that a select committee can discover, because the people who testify before that committee are held harmless with their testimony. And that brings out the truth. Whether it be a police investigation, the Auditor General's investigation, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, those same situations don't exist. That creates a real problem to getting to the truth, and the truth is what we're looking for in this issue.

We've seen eHealth. We never really got to the bottom of that, but we know a lot of Liberal friends made a lot of money out of it. We saw Collegate, where $31 million went out the door because it was the end of

the year and had to be spent in a month, and we saw a lot of Liberal friends get a lot of that money.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Like who?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Well, the Toronto Cricket Club was one. They got $1 million they didn't even ask for. The member wants to know who. I can give you a list of them if you like. It was a disgusting spending of Ontario taxpayers' money—just absolutely disgusting.

Interjections.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Apparently, the truth hurts.

Providing the right venue to get to the bottom of this is what this is all about, and we've seen it time and time again. The Maid of the Mist was another one that happened.

You know, we're approaching a time when the mother of all special interests may be upon us. The Pan American Games and the expenditures of huge amounts of money on venue sites is coming down the road, and I urge the government: Conduct yourself in a transparent way. Let's not have any more of this nonsense that we've seen in Ontario, with the huge expenditures of taxpayers' dollars in a frivolous way. Let's see if we can pull off the Pan American Games in a reasonable way, not mimicking eHealth, Collegate, Maid of the Mist, Ornge and all the rest of the disasters that this government has foisted on the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak in favour of this motion. For the last three months, we've heard details of the Liberal government's mismanagement of Ontario's air ambulance system trickle out through the media. And for months, we, members of the Legislature, have been trying to get answers. It's clear that at some point along the way, there was a massive violation of the public trust. What was supposed to be a coordinated system to provide emergency health care to people across the province somehow ballooned into a web of mismanagement, reckless spending, for-profit subsidiaries who also spent recklessly, and, quite likely, political cronyism.

At this point, I do not believe that we know the full scale of the problem, but we do know that public confidence in our province's air ambulance system has been shattered, and with it confidence in this government's management of one of our most essential services, health care.

We've heard the minister suggest that she acted when she became aware. This may be the case, but it may also be false. The only way we're going to get the answers we need to this question is to create an all-party committee that will investigate this matter and find out exactly what happened.

There are many answers we need to know, including how many jobs this scandal has cost us across the province. I know that, in my riding, the creation of Ornge has led to some serious changes in the number of our air carriers. They've told me that they used to receive a number of calls for transfer of patients, that it was a good part of their business and, to be honest, they did it well. But once Ornge popped up, those calls stopped.

I've heard stories of one business being on the ground in Fort Frances, ready to pick up a patient, but Ornge, with their nearest aircraft sitting on the ground in Sudbury, was called to pick up the patient, with a wait time of two-plus hours and a tremendous cost to the taxpayers.

Needless to say—

Interjection: They don't care.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: No, they don't care.

Needless to say, this affected the Fort Frances company's bottom line and, after several years, it led to the bankruptcy of their company. This meant the relocation of the pilots and their families, and it led to their salaries being taken out of our region and into another province, Manitoba. The relocation of just a few families might not seem like a big deal to people in this Legislature, but small businesses in our small towns are already facing hardships as a result of the downturn in the economy, and it does make a big difference. I've asked them, "If Ornge is eliminated, will you come back?" They've told me that they'd like to, but they've moved on. They've found new roots and new clients with a new company.

So what I'd really like to know is: How many businesses are in the same situation? How many jobs have been lost in our communities? How many municipally run airports have lost landing fees as a result of companies finding new home bases? What is the ultimate price of this scandal? And most importantly, is the infrastructure still in place to take over from Ornge if dissolving the company is the only solution to this problem?

I disagree with the member from Guelph. I don't want this to be a blaming exercise, and I don't want to find scapegoats. I don't think the people in the province of Ontario want that either, but we do want answers. We want to know who created the mess, who knew about it and how it was permitted to happen with all the checks and balances that we're supposed to have with our system. Mismanagement of this magnitude is not supposed to happen in this day and age. We need to find out exactly how it did happen and build in additional checks to ensure that this type of wasteful mismanagement never happens again.

But most importantly, it's my hope that setting up this committee can allow us to focus on other important issues. This scandal has dragged on for months, and it has drawn attention away from other significant issues. This air ambulance issue has turned Queen's Park into a three-ring circus, and it is time that we put the sideshow in its own place and that we get back to the work of fighting for our constituents.

I agree the Ornge scandal has been a massive violation of the public trust, and I agree that we need answers, but I also firmly believe that there are other pressing issues that need to be dealt with—issues such as health care delivery in the north, job creation and bringing our

spending under control—all of which haven't been getting the attention that they deserve because of this scandal.

We need the answers, but we need to seek those answers in the right setting, and this committee is the right setting and the right place. Hopefully, it will lead to us stopping the political posturing and getting real answers for the people of Ontario, the answers that they deserve.

As I said before, we have many questions that need answers, and we need to restore public confidence in the system, and that's why I'm happy to support this committee.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to speak to the Conservative opposition motion moved by the member from Newmarket–Aurora proposing an all-party select committee to look into the events surrounding Ornge.

We have a lot happening in just this week. The Auditor General will be tabling his report tomorrow around noon. The auditor has been involved in his investigation of Ornge, his audit of Ornge, since October of 2010, I believe. The value-for-money audit of Ornge air ambulance started then. We will see better what he is reporting and the action he is suggesting.

The minister said she would be tabling new legislation soon. The minister has removed the board at Ornge, and a competent new board has been put in place. When the new board came on, the minister gave them very specific instructions to focus on patient safety, work with the forensic audit team and wind down the for-profit entities created by Ornge. These steps are exactly what should be done. They've started winding down the for-profit organizations and have taken other steps to improve care and restore public confidence. There's new management in place, led by Mr. Ron McKerlie, a distinguished public servant. He has patient safety at the very top of his list of priorities. The board has appointed one of their new members, Barry McLellan, president and CEO of Sunnybrook Hospital, to spearhead the development of a patient safety framework. I'm confident that the minister will be making changes in the performance agreement between Ornge and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care that will protect taxpayers in the future.

So we have the following happening now and over next few weeks: The Auditor General is about to deliver a report—we'll get that tomorrow around noon—and the minister is about to bring in legislation to make sure Ornge is run according to rules to ensure taxpayers are protected. Let's not forget this new legislation itself will need to go to committees, another place where the Legislature will have a chance to discuss issues surrounding Ornge. That's the point that the member for Willowdale made very clearly: that is going to be another opportunity for members of this Legislature to have input.

The legislation, if passed, would give the government enhanced oversight powers. The minister will be preparing a very strong performance agreement—we've heard that from her—with Ornge, based on the auditor's report and other information. This performance agreement will strengthen the approval required for any changes to the corporate structure at Ornge and fiscal accountability along with enhancing patient care.

The minister sent in the forensic auditors last fall. Following that, the minister requested the OPP to do a criminal investigation, and they will report.

In addition to all this, the public accounts standing committee, of which I'm a member, will soon start hearings on Ornge. We meet tomorrow. Witnesses will be called on March 28, on April 4 and on April 18, after the constit week. We meet this week to determine who we will call as witnesses. This is the job of the standing committee, and this will take place over several weeks. These are the proper procedures. The decision to conduct hearings on Ornge at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts was supported by all parties.

So I ask the member and his caucus to wait for the Auditor General's report. Wait for the OPP investigation. Wait for the legislation. Wait for the public accounts standing committee's report. Let the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care prepare and execute a new performance agreement. Your motion would put in place a parallel inquiry that would call many of the same witnesses, review the same documents and come out with a parallel set of recommendations that would add no new information to the issues.

While we are discussing this issue, we should take a moment to look at the accomplishments of this government over the past eight years. Health care in Ontario has seen over one million more Ontarians with a family doctor, over 200 family health teams in place, the shortest wait times in Canada and many, many more improvements.

The minister announced yesterday the transition of hospitals to patient-based funding. New funding will transition over three years from a global funding model to funding based on health-based allocation models and quality-based procedures. Health-based allocation models are based on the number of patients served and the characteristics of the population served and performed. Who would have thought that we were going to do it on that basis when we've done it the other way for so long? Quality-based procedures are based on the costs of providing specified target services and the outcomes that hospitals provide. Part of the payment to hospitals will remain global in nature, but this marks a transformation of health care. Imagine, after 50 years we're moving to paying hospitals based on their performance.

Ontario air ambulance has run into some difficulties, and we are taking action to correct those problems. This is a situation, of course, that no one wants to be in, but we can see from the initiatives the minister has taken, the audit the AG has completed and the hearings the public accounts committee will hold that this motion calling for the appointment of a select committee is, at the best, grandstanding.

The minister took action. She replaced the board at Ornge. She put in new administration personnel. She's bringing in new legislation. She sent in the OPP. She will sign a much more comprehensive performance agreement with Ornge. From the beginning, she has said that patient safety is number one. When questions began to arise about the operations of Ornge, the minister started asking questions. When the answers to those questions were not good enough and the former leadership at Ornge showed they were stonewalling the Auditor General, the minister took action.

This motion would authorize duplication of effort. The facts are coming in quickly. This Legislature will soon have all the facts. We need to allow for all the investigations to be complete. I urge the member from Newmarket–Aurora to withdraw this motion, which is certainly going in a direction of rehashing and duplicating the processes that are already under way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm happy to stand in support of today's motion. The biggest concern I have about the Ornge fiasco is oversight, or the lack thereof. That is why I support a select committee. The examples that I'm going to use demonstrate why a select committee is the only appropriate vehicle.

It seems that the executives at Ornge had free hand to do whatever they wished with the millions of dollars they received from Ontario taxpayers. Meanwhile, the government did nothing. They did not even stand up to Ornge when they refused to divulge their budgets.

On Dalton McGuinty's watch, changes to air ambulance services have resulted in a 450% cost increase and reduced accountability.

The member from Newmarket–Aurora had warned the Premier and his ministers about questionable business practices at Ornge and the lack of accountability and oversight. Rather than act on the information, the government insisted there were no problems with Ornge.

On April 13, 2011, the member from Newmarket–Aurora asked the Premier why the annual report for Ornge did not make one reference to financial information, yet 12 million of taxpayers' dollars had been transferred to this company. He also pointed out that Ornge had just moved into a $3-million facility. Capital expenses attributed to Ornge for the 2008-09 fiscal year were $2.25 million. In 2009-10 they increased to $8.6 million, followed by another increase in 2010-11 to more than $12 million.

The member from Newmarket–Aurora asked how much of that taxpayer-funded capital had subsidized equipment and facilities that are actually being used for the for-profit businesses that are also owned by the Ornge organization. What was the answer given by the Minister of Finance? He said, "The Minister of Health is rightly proud of the achievements of the new Ornge ambulance service, which is expanding air ambulance service across the province and, as I understand it, doing it in a very, very efficient way." It turns out the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health believe that wasting taxpayer dollars is efficient, even though those dollars were allocated to serving Ontarians in need of health services.

On April 21, 2011, the member for Newmarket–Aurora stated, "According to Tom Lepine, chief operating officer at Ornge, taxpayers have no right to that financial information."

There has been absolutely no oversight of Ornge, a taxpayer-funded organization. The Premier and his ministers did not even have the courage to confront Ornge, although all their secrets were being unveiled, and the Premier failed Ontarians who depend on Ornge to save their lives.

The Minister of Health has said that the government will be introducing legislation that will bring enhanced transparency, accountability and oversight to Ornge. My concern is, what kind of legislation can we count on the government to introduce if current legislation did nothing at all to protect Ontario taxpayers?

It is for these reasons that I support the motion being brought forward today to have a select committee to investigate the issue.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, at the outset I'd like to make it very clear that I wholeheartedly support this motion, and I applaud the efforts of the member from Newmarket–Aurora for having the courage to stand up in this House and to bring this motion forward.

We have been calling for this motion as well because it's incumbent on us as elected officials to realize what our duty is. We have a responsibility. We have a greater duty than many others because we are here elected to represent those in Ontario. We have a duty to ensure that the scarce resources that we have are used appropriately. That is our duty in this House, and we must take this duty very, very seriously. In order to do so, any steps that we can take to ensure that our money, our taxpayer dollars are spent properly is not enough; we need to do as much as possible.

With respect to accountability, it's very concerning that this organization was set up at its outset in a manner that obscured legislative accountability, that obscured the ability of elected officials to investigate what was going on. It was purposely set up with this, and that's why we want to know who knew what, when. Who knew what and when? It's incumbent on this government to disclose who knew the details, who was aware of what the scheme was and when they were aware of this so that we can prevent wastage of precious dollars in the future.

It's not enough to come to the bottom of this scandal alone. We need to ensure that there are proper checks and balances so that we do not have such a scandal occur in the future, so we can prevent this from happening.

On the horizon, we have looming cuts. We have a report which indicates that we need to cut services to families. When times are difficult, we need to be able to say to Ontarians that their precious dollars were used

effectively and with some accountability, and the fact that they weren't is a shame and a disgrace.

That's why I wholeheartedly support this select committee. We need to get to the bottom of this. The select committee will have greater powers to delve deeper into the true reasons why this occurred and to come up with some recommendations on how we can avoid this in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It's a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to spend some time this afternoon discussing this issue, the motion that's been put forward by the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

It's interesting, Madam Speaker, when you look at the history of this place. I just took a quick scan of select committees from 1991 to 2003, and in every case over that period of time when a select committee was put forward, there was always a consensus on all sides of the House that this would be the appropriate mechanism to go forward to look at something.

In 1990, we had the Select Committee on Ontario in Confederation. In 1997, we had the Select Committee on Hydro Nuclear Affairs. In 2001, we had the Select Committee on Alternative Fuel Sources. In 2005, of course, we had the Select Committee on Electoral Reform in the province of Ontario. In 2008, we had the Select Committee on Elections in the province of Ontario. We had the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, a committee that I had the privilege to serve on, along with others. We also had the Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX Group and the London Stock Exchange Group back in 2011. These are all select committees that were put together—all non-partisan, all discussing very important topics of the day. When you take the opportunity to look at this research, you'll see that there was a consensus on recommendations that the government of the day took into consideration, and indeed it implemented these things.

But it is very interesting that the members opposite have found religion for select committees. I just want to review a couple of things. There was a select committee that was requested to look into day trading at Agricorp back in 1995 and 2003. Was there a select committee that looked into that? No.

There was a select committee that was asked for—a former distinguished member of this House the honourable Gerry Phillips asked consecutively, for nine years, about having a select committee into the circumstances around the tragic death of Dudley George at Ipperwash. Was there a select committee that ever looked at that, Madam Speaker?

Hon. James J. Bradley: No.

Mr. Jeff Leal: The answer is no. Thank you, Mr. Bradley.

Another issue that cropped up—I just happened to look at it today—is the work that was done by the former member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and a very honourable gentleman, Jim Brownell. He was the guy that came forward to make sure that we had an investigation in Cornwall, Ontario, but interestingly enough—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Along with Garry Guzzo.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'm going to talk about Mr. Guzzo, the former very distinguished member from Ottawa West. During his time that he served so ably as a member of the Conservative caucus, from 1995 to 2003—he was a retired judge—he asked consistently of the government of the day to look at the events that were surrounding the abuse of young people in the greater Cornwall area. Did that ever happen, Mr. Bradley?

Hon. James J. Bradley: No.

Mr. Jeff Leal: No.

So when we had the opportunity to have the privilege of forming government in the province of Ontario, one of the first things we did is we had a formal inquiry into Ipperwash, and then we had a formal inquiry into the events surrounding the abuse of young people in Cornwall, Ontario. When people get the religion, it's great to notice that, the old Saul on the road to Damascus routine.

Interestingly enough, we have a vehicle available, the public accounts committee, which can be duly tasked to look at this. They have the power to request people to make presentations to that committee.

Interjection: Non-partisan.

Mr. Jeff Leal: A non-partisan committee, formerly chaired very ably by Norm Sterling, who I happen to think did an excellent job when he was chairing the public accounts committee.

Interjection: Where is he?

Interjection: Done in.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Threw him under the bus.

But my experience, of course, when I subbed in the public accounts committee, was it was the opportunity to bring ministry staff forward, to look at the issues of the day, to come up with recommendations, to look at events surrounding a particular event. There are nine committees available. The public accounts committee has the ability to bring everybody they want to have the opportunity to look at the Ornge issue.

I think the current Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has made great strides into getting rid of the board at Ornge. It's exactly the same thing that a former Premier of the province of Ontario did. Those folks in the opposition who served with Mike Harris from 1995 to 2003 will remember that when the Agricorp issue was brought to his attention, what did he do immediately? He brought in a new board. His response to the opposition questions of the day? He responded and said, "I brought in a new board. We have the public accounts committee working on it. We're straightening it up," and I could rest assured there would be no more problems at Agricorp. It's exactly the same approach that the Minister of Health has initiated: requesting the Auditor General to take a look at circumstances around Ornge, bringing in the OPP to do a full criminal investigation. We look forward to the results of that criminal investigation and the possibil-

ity of bringing in new restrictive legislation dealing with Ornge.

So it's great that the opposition has found religion. I appreciate that; I think it's great. But when you look at their track record in the past, from 1995 to 2003, when they were asked to do select committees on issues that were just as important to the people of Ontario as Ornge is—I know I still get questions in my office from my First Nations community in Peterborough, Hiawatha and Curve Lake about the events surrounding Ipperwash. I know there are also some people who were interested in the Cornwall area. But when we had the privilege of forming government, we decided we wanted a full investigation.

Madam Speaker, there are committees available. The public accounts committee will take a look at this, and we'll move forward with the review of Ornge.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today in support of the opposition day motion presented by my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora and thank him for his dedication to uncovering all the problems that have gone on with Ornge. It was over a year ago that the Ontario PC caucus warned that provincial health care dollars were being used to subsidize this complex web of for-profit companies.

The member opposite just spoke of finding religion; well, we gave you the tip over a year ago that there was something wrong, and until we pushed it and pushed it and pushed it, are you actually trying to do something—not enough in our books. We're trying to push it further. But finding religion, that's just a story that's hogwash, if I can say, Madam Speaker.

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In 2005, Ornge was born under a cloud of Ontario's air ambulance services, being turned over to Dr. Chris Mazza for a dollar with no competitive bidding process. You see in the intervening years we've witnessed a legacy of misuse, abuse and greed. Ornge has been funded by Ontario taxpayers to the tune of $150 million a year. The very people that the health minister entrusted to deliver and safeguard air ambulance services have betrayed that trust for personal gain. Separate companies were established for the purpose of paying exorbitant salaries which would not be reported on the province's sunshine list. The president and CEO received an annual salary of $1.4 million, which, incredibly, was not on the sunshine list. Taxpayers paid $600,000 for Ornge executives to pursue business degrees at overseas institutions. One of the for-profit companies received a payment of $6.7 million for the Italian supplier of 12 new helicopters to Ornge. Despite the fact that high salaries were paid out to deliberately avoid the sunshine list, the Ornge employees who did appear on the list jumped from 16 in 2006 to 116 in 2011, for an increase of 725% in five years.

The member from York–Simcoe already brought up that the overall cost to the taxpayer for Ontario's air ambulance services has increased by 450% under the McGuinty government. In what universe can that actually be defended and justified? It is outrageous.

The PC and the NDP caucuses stand united in demanding the establishment of a select committee of the Legislature to thoroughly investigate this ongoing scandal at Ornge. As my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora so aptly spells out in his motion, the select committee needs to "investigate and report ... on Ontario's air ambulance system (including Ornge and its affiliates)."

It's simple. We're asking them: select committee. They're throwing all this other stuff out about there are investigations going on; these other committees can cover it. They can't. That's why we are united with the NDP in asking for a select committee. The committee can concentrate on those things, such as "patient and employee safety, management, oversight, governance and accountability mechanisms."

When this motion was tabled, the health minister assured the Legislature she would respect the will of the House in terms of establishing a select committee. We will soon find out if it's true or not. We await her appearance.

The crisis at Ornge is a lightning rod for everything that is wrong with this government. They sit there with their heads down and blah-blah, but it is a lightning rod. It's evident, the mismanagement of this government; they've let it go on for so long.

We're all witnessing this unprecedented legacy of mismanagement, out-of-control spending, misuse and abuse of public trust and, in this particular case, throw in greed and corruption. The people of Ontario demand the full truth on Ornge. In addition to the criminal investigation being conducted by the OPP , the Legislature does owe it to the voters and taxpayers of Ontario to determine not only what went so terribly wrong, but how did it all happen under their watch?

I'm urging all the members in the Legislature to vote for this motion demanding a full select committee investigation into this Ornge fiasco and scandal.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To have a few minutes to make a couple of comments on this, I just want to say the first thing—and I just don't want my Conservative friends to all of a sudden think I'm going somewhere else. A select committee is something normally where people want to get together and work on an item. I had this conversation with different people, and I understand the argument. However, in this Parliament, that's not allowed because the mechanism by which we would have to be able to deal with this whole issue, either at public accounts or, more importantly, at a standing committee to which the Ministry of Health is now supposing to report to—we have asked the government to move the Ministry of Health from an opposition-chaired committee to a government-chaired committee, and the government has refused.

Part of the problem I have is that the mechanism that I would like to have in order to deal with the review of Ornge, the government doesn't want to allow us to do it because they're leaving the Ministry of Health in a standing committee by which there is a tie, and with that tie, the Chair—if the government decided to vote in block against the opposition, we would not have an opportunity, by using standing order 126, to review Ornge as we have the right to do. So understand why I'm in the position where I actually support the motion because I think the government has put us in a position where we don't have a lot of choice.

Just to make it clear, now that I got my thoughts together, because I was trying to pull the standing orders as I was getting up to speak: Normally the members of this assembly have an opportunity to do what's called a review under standing order 126, and in that particular review, any member can go into one of the standing committees, either general government, justice committee and others, and be able to say, "I want to look at a particular item, and I want to do a review." That would be one of the mechanisms that the opposition would have to review Ornge.

The unfortunate reality is, when I as an NDP House leader went to the Legislative Assembly committee and proposed that the government take the Ministry of Health out of the committee for which there is a tie and rather put it into a committee for which there is not a tie but that is governed by the opposition by sheer numbers, the government refused. So where am I going to go? If the auditor decides he or she is not going to do something, there's not a lot of places you can go. It's fairly limited what you can do under government agencies, I say to the former House leader from the Liberal Party from years ago, because government agencies reviews government agencies and Ornge is not a government agency. So I can't review it there either. So where am I to go?

The only choice we have is to move a motion in the House that says that we'll form a select committee. It's not my preferred option. My preferred option would have been to have the government say, "Let's move the Ministry of Health out of the committee that it's currently at and let's put it in a committee where the government doesn't control the committee by way of a tie."

That's why we're at where we're at. I just wanted to put that on the record.

The second thing I want to say, and very quickly, is that we had a pretty good system before Ornge was actually created. We had the hybrid of the Ministry of Health and we had private providers that were doing the work of transporting patients to and from various hospitals in this province. In my riding, there was a company that just closed its doors about two months ago, and that's aviation commerciale, or Commercial Aviation, that's run out of Hearst. For years, they operated a very successful carrier where they did both charter work and medevacs for the Ministry of Health. As a result of Ornge coming in, they've essentially taken all the business away, so that aviation commerciale, which had bases in Kapuskasing, in Hearst and in Timmins, have closed their doors. Why? Because the contract that they had with the Ministry of Health, eventually through Ornge, was pulled away. They said, "We'll allow you to bid on another contract for a year's time." How do you finance airplanes on a one-year contract? You can't do it.

So, je viens de dire, pour mes amis à aviation commerciale que j'ai connus très longtemps—M. Lanoix et les autres qui travaillent là—c'est une compagnie qui a travaillé très fort pour donner un service excellent, non seulement aux clients sur les avions quand ça vient à des charters, mais aussi quand ça vient à la question de déplacer les patients d'un hôpital à l'autre. Et parce qu'il y a des décisions qui ont été faites à Ornge, on se trouve dans une situation où ils ont perdu leur contrat, et en perdant leur contrat il a fallu fermer leurs portes. Ça veut dire des mises à pied à Hearst, à Kapuskasing, à Timmins. Ça veut dire des ambulanciers, ça veut dire des pilotes, ça veut dire des mécaniques, et c'est un service qu'on perd dans notre comté que, franchement, on n'avait pas besoin de fermer. Donc, je vais laisser ma collègue parler, mais je voulais mettre ça sur le record. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Fixed-wing air ambulance service started in the late 1970s with doctors and hospitals calling air carriers directly. Through the 1980s, it developed a consolidated system whereby the Ministry of Health coordinated the transfer with air carriers offering to carry patients on a per-trip basis. The Ministry of Health wanted a dedicated air ambulance service using helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft which had customized or dedicated interiors and government-provided paramedics.

In 2001, the Ministry of Health consolidated their air service with two contract companies, one for fixed-wing and one for rotary or helicopter. Speaker, together those two companies had bases in eight communities throughout northern Ontario, plus Toronto and Ottawa. They each employed 25 to 30 personnel, comprised of 11 pilots, 11 paramedics and three or so maintenance technicians and administrative support in each company.

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Not leaving well enough alone, in 2005, the provincial government announced the creation of Ornge. Instead of continuing to use the two private sector airlines which, for 30 years, had provided a valuable service to northern Ontario, Ornge instead used valuable health care dollars to purchase aircraft: 10 Pilatus single aircraft, plus helicopters. These are tens upon tens of millions of dollars. They used potential MRI dollars to set up hangars across the north and in the south, and emergency room dollars became aircraft maintenance bays. Basically, Speaker, they needed to purchase or acquire everything needed to get into the airline business. They obtained an operating certificate, which allows them to fly. They obtained an aircraft maintenance organization certificate, which gives

them the authority to perform maintenance on their own aircraft. In fact, their AMO certificate is very specific to the Pilatus, Sikorsky and the Agusta helicopters—specifically, the three aircraft that they fly.

They also became basically an extremely large government-owned airline. Contracts across the north were terminated, and long-term employees throughout the north were also terminated. The very air operators and aircraft maintenance organizations that were providing services to the Ministry of Health for over 30 years—the ones with the expertise, the human resources and the ability to safely and reliably provide service to the province and our patients—are gone. The air ambulance employees throughout the north are gone, and so is all the expertise, the very expertise Ornge said they wanted to sell around the world. It's no wonder the for-profit companies failed: They had nothing to sell.

Speaker, this all-party select committee is meant to look at more than the financial problems at Ornge. They've got managers that have absolutely no air ambulance expertise. This committee will get to the bottom of the problems the front-line staff are raising about operational decisions that affected both their crew and patient safety. The purpose is to give the front-line staff an open, transparent forum to speak out about their concerns publicly. Speaker, only a select committee will provide the appropriate forum.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

M^me^ France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to lend my support to this very important motion. A couple of weeks ago, I stood beside the member from—oh, I should have looked this up—

Mr. Frank Klees: Newmarket–Aurora.

M^me^ France Gélinas: Newmarket–Aurora. I stood beside the member for Newmarket–Aurora, and together, representing his party and mine, we requested a select committee.

I did not take this decision lightly, Madam Speaker. It came after many, many weeks of work, many weeks of work where we really tried to give the members of the government an opportunity to show us and tell us that they had the intention to get to the bottom of what had happened at Ornge. During all of that time, I stood in this House and asked questions daily, and so did the member from Newmarket-Aurora—stood and asked questions. For all of the questions that we asked, we got pretty much the same answer: that the auditor had been called in, that the OPP was investigating, and that was going to be it. That was going to be the end of it.

The work that is being done by the forensic auditors and the work that has been done by our Auditor General, as well as the investigation of the OPP, is all important work. I don't want to take anything away from this, but there are big pieces that will still not be touched at all, and we owe it to the people of Ontario to be accountable.

When something like this happens, when you see people pocketing $1.4-million salaries that were hidden from the public view, when you see a slew of personal chefs and personal trainers and an abuse of taxpayers' money, people lose confidence, for good reason. We want to rebuild that confidence. We want to make sure that whatever derailed, whatever allowed for this to happen, never happens again.

Tomorrow, the Auditor General will table his report. He does excellent work as an Auditor General. He gets to the bottom of value for money. This is what he does. We already know we didn't get value for money at Ornge, but he will put it in black and white, and I'm sure it will be a good report. Then we will have three days where the way it really works, we have to put in a list of key witnesses who will be invited to come and answer questions from the people in public accounts. I'm one of them.

The problem with this is, myself and the member from Newmarket–Aurora and maybe others also have dozens and dozens of emails from people who know of wrongdoing, who know who knew when and what and did nothing. In those emails they tell us what they know, but they say, "But I don't want my name used, because if you say this out loud, they will know that I told you this because I'm the only person who has that knowledge." There is no way I can call this person to come and testify in front of public accounts. I have to give a list of the witnesses I want to appear. This person has already told me, "You can't use my name. I'm afraid for my job. I'm afraid for myself. I want you to know what really went on, but you can't use my name."

So, what we want to do is, first, we give the government a chance to say, "Yes, we will create a forum to get to the bottom of this. Yes, we will create a forum where whistle-blowers and people who want protection will have an opportunity to come and tell us what they know." They're telling me right now, and they're telling the member from Newmarket–Aurora, but there's nothing we can do with that information because those people are scared and need our protection.

So, after looking through all this, after taking the time to ask questions, trying to get a briefing, trying to get to the bottom of this and trying to basically judge a little bit the amount of collaboration we were going to get from the Liberal side of the House, we took the very unusual decision that both opposition parties would stand together at a press conference and ask for a select committee.

Then, today, after we had formally repeated or asked in the House many, many times, and always being served the same answers, we brought it as a motion in the House. We do have a glimpse of hope here because the Minister of Health is on record as saying that if it was the wish of the Legislative Assembly, they will respect that wish. Well, in a few minutes, the Legislative Assembly will have spoken. We will speak through a vote on this motion. If a vote on this motion carries, that the wish of the Legislative Assembly is to get to the bottom of this by setting forth a select committee, that will allow us to bring forward people who say they will only come forward if we afford them protection, people whom there is no way we can call to public accounts, there is no way

we can call them on another committee because when we do this, we have to submit our list of witnesses. Those people have to be afforded a safe environment to come and tell us what went wrong, because things that went wrong are huge.

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At the basis of any change is, first, if you want to change something, you have to admit that there's been a mistake. Once you admit there's been a mistake, you learn from it and you move on. There is nothing more that I would like than to move on from Ornge. There's nothing more that I would like than to be able to turn the page and say, "Here's exactly what went wrong. Here's who slept on the switch, here's who didn't do their work and here are some of the contractual arrangements that allowed for all of that to happen. Here's the wrongdoing that we want to change so that we can build confidence in our air ambulance system," because right now, it has been shaken to the core—shaken to the core, to the point where a lot of the good paramedics, physicians and everybody else who works within the system are jumping ship. They don't want to be associated with that organization anymore, and that puts all of us at risk.

I want us to be proud of our air ambulance system, to know that—I live in the north. My constituents depend on a good air ambulance system, I would say more than most of the people in the south. We need and we want a good air ambulance system. In order for that page to be turned, we need that select committee to be struck. We need to give a safe forum for people to come forward, people who have already told us what they know but don't feel the confidence to share it if we don't provide them with a forum for them to do that safely. Public accounts cannot give them that. Public accounts is not a forum that can give people the assurance that the whistleblowers will be protected. This is not how public accounts works.

The need to get to the bottom sometimes is acknowledged by the people from the Liberal Party, but we also need to act.

I realize that I only have a few seconds left on the clock.

Once you start to dig into some of the dealings that were going on at Ornge, it looks like a mafia movie. It's unbelievable everything that went on in there, from money laundering, to kickbacks, to you-name-it. It all happened, and it all happened with taxpayers' money. There are people out there who saw those transactions who know exactly who got what, when, who raised the alarm bell, who tried to alert—and they will come forward. They will come forward once we give them a select committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. I've been listening to the comments from members across the aisle and those from my colleagues in my own party.

I had the privilege in the last term of government of chairing one of the select committees, and I have to tell you, Speaker, it was one of the best experiences of my political life. But I'll tell you that that Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions wasn't born in the way that is being suggested today for this one. It was born in a sense of co-operation, and I think it was born for the best of reasons. I think that was a major ingredient in the success of that committee in drawing all sides together, in what is a pretty partisan place, usually, on most issues.

I want to say from the outset how proud I am of the paramedics and the front-line workers. The previous speaker talked about living in a northern community and how important Ornge is to her. I live in a community where the QEW bisects it. I often spend an awful lot of time driving up the 400. Certainly, my experience with the Ornge choppers is usually when they're landing at a very tragic traffic accident.

I've heard the reasons for forming a select committee. They're not reasons at this time that I would agree really meet the intent or the test for why you would form a select committee. We've got the public accounts committee; we have that option; we've got the OPP actively involved in investigating at Ornge; we've got the Auditor General bringing in his report today; and we've got legislation that is coming that's going to require hearings through the committee system as well. So it seems to me that maybe, at some point in the future, there is a need for a select committee, but I think, with everything that's going on, with the actions that the minister has taken to date in replacing the board, that it's time right now to get to the bottom of something that we all agree should not have happened, and perhaps at that point we can move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: We are nearing the end of our time for debate on this important subject and I don't have a lot of time to speak, but there are a couple of points that I would really like to make, starting, first of all, by commending my colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora for his persistence and diligence in voicing the many concerns that have been brought to him over the last couple of years and for not dropping the ball on this, which has led to the debate that we're having here today. It was only because he was consistently brushed off by this government, who refused to recognize that there were problems going on over at Ornge until it erupted into a crisis, and that's why we find ourselves here today asking for the creation of a select committee to find out what went so badly wrong at Ornge right under the government's nose, so to speak.

The government members today have raised a number of reasons why we don't really need a select committee, that there are other ways that we can deal with this issue. I'd like to deal with each one of them to show why I believe that these are arguments without merit.

First of all, there is the argument that existing committees can deal with that. Certainly I would suggest that an issue of this depth and complexity isn't really

something that can be properly dealt with in the public accounts committee.

Secondly, the Auditor General and OPP are conducting their examinations and the Auditor General will be coming forward with his report tomorrow, but with all due respect, the Auditor General is looking at something different. He has a different focus; he's looking at value for money. Similarly, the OPP is taking a look at evidence of criminal wrongdoing. What we really want to find out is what went on here; how, despite numerous warning flags being raised, this government failed to respond. That's what we need to get to and that's why we need a select committee.

Now, the government is also saying, "Don't worry. We've got it covered. Everything's okay. We're bringing forward legislation to make sure that it doesn't happen again." Madam Speaker, we don't know what "it" is. The public doesn't know; the members of this Legislature don't know. I would venture to say that the Premier and the ministers don't even know. How can you possibly suggest any kind of legislation that's going to be meaningful when you haven't even properly defined the problem? That's why the legislation is premature, because we don't even know what we're dealing with.

I will say, Madam Speaker, that we had a situation where, in January 2011, a 21-page letter was written to the Minister of Health from the chairman of the board of Ornge to talk about the reorganization of the air ambulance system in Ontario; fair enough. But 21 pages to describe how you're restructuring something that's been around for many years?

I don't think this qualifies as a prop, but I think the people need to see the very complicated interrelationships between the for-profit companies and the not-for-profit companies that Ornge set up here—and a total of 12 companies, including management agreements and all kinds of things.

In a former life, I worked as a bank inspector in tax savings in different parts of the world, and I can tell you, when you see a setup like this, you know that people are trying to draw you off track. They don't want you to know what's really going on. That's why we need to have a select committee to get to the bottom of Ornge and understand why all of this was necessary.

I would say also, from some of the corporate searches that we've done, that as of December 8, 2011, there was another company that was incorporated: Ornge Global Brazil Holdings Limited. How does that possibly relate to the operation of an air ambulance service in Ontario? That's why we need a select committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues for participating in this debate. I want to thank my colleagues from the NDP caucus as well.

I want to just say to you how disappointing it has been for me to hear members from the government caucus stand in their place and obviously tell us that they're going to be voting against this motion. The reason I'm so disappointed is because I know that the people of this province are seeing, once again, a government that is intent on hiding the truth rather than having the truth come forward so that we can deal with it.

The members of the government have spoken. Each one who stood in their place spoke about process and how everything is all right. Well, Speaker, we have heard that from this minister time and time again while a scandal was brewing all the time under her watch. We need the minister now to honour her commitment that she would support the will of the Legislature, which will be determined by a vote in just a few minutes. We'll see what the integrity of the minister is all about in terms of how she responds to this vote.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. Klees has moved opposition day number 3—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Oh, we're not out of time.

Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: There are some things to agree with in the discourse by the member from Newmarket–Aurora, and there are some things to disagree with as well.

This is a serious member who speaks seriously and speaks well on any issue he addresses. Indeed, in his demeanour in the Legislature, the member for Newmarket–Aurora is someone for new members to look up to. So let's look at what's to like, what's to differ with and whether or not honest people of good character can or should disagree.

The member for Newmarket–Aurora and his party advocate a greater role for the private sector in the delivery of health care; and a previous Minister of Health in the province of Ontario thought the concept had some merit a number of years ago.

On this side, we agree with the member for Newmarket–Aurora in feeling angry, outraged and betrayed at what seems to be a corporate culture of the worst kind of greed. We are both beyond disappointment, indeed shocked and appalled, that an accountability agreement intended to govern a relationship between honest and ethical parties acting in a reasonable and a respectful manner should apparently be twisted, flouted, misused and abused by Ornge.

The evidence this House has seen suggests that the former Ornge management must be held to account. All the members of this House agree on that. When the Ministry of Health began to take apart Ornge, the member spoke on the issue, and we applaud him for that.

When the member asked the minister what she planned to do about Ornge, she told him that the Auditor General's staff was taking apart the operations of Ornge, or at least trying to. The member knows that when the Auditor General could not get answers, the minister hauled in the management of Ornge and ordered them to

disclose information to the Auditor General's staff. We expect the Auditor General's report this week.

Here is where I differ with my friend from Newmarket–Aurora, and it's an honest difference. I ask the member whether his call for a select committee before the auditor has presented his report presumes the findings in the Auditor General's report. I ask the member whether it might be a better idea to hear from the Auditor General first. What if, as expected, the Auditor General does his usual thorough and rigorous analysis? How could the member for Newmarket–Aurora respond to the House and say, "Well, we have an opinion from the House that we ought to have a select committee, but it seems that the Auditor General has gotten into the dark corners that our select committee had in mind." Wouldn't the member from Newmarket–Aurora like to have the select committee as a viable contingency instead of presuming the outcome of the Auditor General's report?

When the member from Newmarket–Aurora asked who was looking into the allegations of whether the executive team broke the law, the Minister of Health told him and this House that the Ontario Provincial Police were investigating Ornge. The member and indeed all Ontarians had to take "yes" for an answer to the question of, if there was wrongdoing at Ornge, were the police on top of it and could they get to the bottom of it?

The member for Newmarket–Aurora served in cabinet while his party was in government. He held two portfolios and served both well and honourably. I commend him. But he knows from having sworn his oath to enter cabinet that no minister of the crown controls the police. No minister of the crown may start, stop or in any way affect a police investigation, and an OPP investigation is ongoing.

Speaker, a question the member may wish to answer to me or to the House is this: Does this opposition day motion presume the outcome of an independent police investigation? And while the OPP looks into whether anyone at Ornge broke the law and the Auditor General finishes his investigation into the books and the network of affiliated companies, does the member's call for a select committee risk tainting any evidence?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. I ask the members to take your conversations elsewhere.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Does the member's call for a select committee risk tainting any evidence or testimony, or risk the integrity of two independent, arm's-length inquiry processes? If he answers no, I respectfully differ with him. It is possible for people of integrity to disagree. To protect the integrity of the investigations by the Auditor General and the OPP, I suggest he stand his proposal down until we've had a chance to hear first from the Auditor General and the OPP.

The member for Newmarket–Aurora also knows that an all-party committee of this Legislature ordered hearings to review this week's Auditor General's report. That committee is the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, chaired, in fact, by the member's own caucus colleague the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. I know that the member from Newmarket–Aurora does not mean, directly, indirectly or by implication, to diminish the role of his caucus colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka, or to presume the outcome of deliberations of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The member from Newmarket–Aurora has enormous respect for the institution of government and for the role of this Legislature. So, for the third solid and fundamental reason, I ask him whether he wishes, by design or by accident, to presume or to duplicate the work of this Legislature or of the committee if it's an all-party committee chaired by his own colleague.

Finally, Speaker, should legislation arise from the Auditor General's report—which seems a high probability—that legislation would itself be sent to another committee of this Legislature. That means at least four separate investigations are either in process or highly likely on the subject of Ornge.

We share with the member from Newmarket–Aurora the outrage over the allegations of shenanigans, secrecy and management misconduct at Ornge. We could understand this initiative if it were all this Legislature had, or if it proposed to examine an area not currently under investigation, or if it addressed findings or recommendations or an oversight that the Auditor General or the OPP or the standing committee, or if its proposed or evaluated findings—but it does none of these things.

So I ask the member from Newmarket–Aurora a final time, would he stand down this well-meaning but at best premature resolution until the Auditor General, the OPP, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and/or the Standing Committee on Public Accounts table findings or results that may give substance to such an initiative?

I agree with him, Speaker. Let's get to the truth. But Speaker, where I differ with him is, let's do it right. I think the manner in which this member has proposed a worthy proposal doesn't do the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Further debate?

Mr. Klees has moved opposition day motion 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Mr. Klees has moved opposition day motion 3. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Schein, Jonah

Bisson, Gilles	Leone, Rob	Scott, Laurie
Campbell, Sarah	MacLaren, Jack	Shurman, Peter
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Singh, Jagmeet
Clark, Steve	Mantha, Michael	Smith, Todd
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonell, Jim	Taylor, Monique
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Vanthof, John
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Norm	Walker, Bill
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Milligan, Rob E.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Harris, Michael	Natyshak, Taras	Yakabuski, John
Hillier, Randy	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff
Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John	

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine
Balkissoon, Bas	Dickson, Joe	Milloy, John
Bartolucci, Rick	Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza
Bentley, Christopher	Duncan, Dwight	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Naqvi, Yasir
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Piruzza, Teresa
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoskins, Eric	Qaadri, Shafiq
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Sousa, Charles
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Takhar, Harinder S.
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Wong, Soo
Coteau, Michael	Mangat, Amrit	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Crack, Grant	Mauro, Bill	Zimmer, David
Damerla, Dipika	McNeely, Phil	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 53; the nays are 41.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1803.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margarett R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
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Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
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Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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First Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario
Première session, 40e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 21 March 2012

Mercredi 21 mars 2012

MAR 26 2012
University of Toronto

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 21 March 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 21 mars 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE ACT (EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE CONGÉ FAMILIAL POUR LES AIDANTS NATURELS (MODIFICATION DES NORMES D'EMPLOI)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 8, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver leave / Projet de loi 30, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to rise this morning to speak on Bill 30, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver leave.

This bill was introduced on December 8 and has been discussed on a couple of occasions. I thought it was important for us who are proud to be parents and family members. At this stage in life, I can tell you that these provisions of being able to take time off for compassionate leave and caregiver leave are important. We live in a busy economy.

Now, I would say this: Let's be fair here. When the bill was introduced—I had a chance this morning in preparation here to look at the remarks made by the minister. No one can fault the intent at all, really. Quite frankly, it's compassionate, it's the right thing to do. That's not in dispute here at all. I think that's a given. Also, in looking at the response from our critic, Mr. Hillier, it basically said, "During those technical briefings with the minister's staff I did have a number of concerns that were raised in those briefings. The first of my concerns is just the very limited consultations that the ministry has done on this bill." Of course, I expect at second reading it will go to public hearings to clarify some of the intents.

Again, I want to repeat, repeat, repeat on this thing. It's important to say, compassionately, that we think it's the right thing to do.

Now, this is where it becomes somewhat my job in the opposition to point out things that the minister—I see the minister is here; I appreciate that as well.

I should qualify as well: I worked in personnel for General Motors for probably about 10 years in my 31-year career. Part of that was dealing with these very issues of what's paid time off, what's not paid time off and what's leave of absence. In fact, when I was first elected in 1995, I had a leave of absence for political purpose and for public service.

Now here's the issue: For large corporations, many of them incorporate this as good HR policy. I'm also thinking of people I know who are independent. Take, for instance, a doctor's office. They have a receptionist, probably a nurse. If one or both took the time off, they're out of business. Now, who pays for it? That's where we're really getting into the implementation phase or the how to do it, how to get it right.

But I looked at the minister's remarks. It was all very—"Our bill fulfills a commitment" that they made during the election of "a new kind of leave for family caregivers." Everyone was looking forward to it. There's not one nickel in this bill, not one cent in the bill, on behalf of the government. But what they are doing here is—she goes into this sad tirade here. Oh, here it is: Our proposal would give "up to eight weeks of unpaid job-protected leave to employees to care for seriously ill or injured family members."

This is the real linchpin of the whole thing, and the people of Ontario have got to know just how shallow this particular government is. And that's not the intent. The intent here—if it was done by our leader, Tim Hudak, we'd have a plan that was executed. There'd be a set of regulations that would allow this to become effective.

Here's what it says here. Remember, the people taking the time off don't get one nickel. In fact, the employer, you could argue, is saving money. There are 600,000 families in Ontario now that don't even have a job. Caregiver allowance? They're sitting at home watching Dr. Phil or Oprah or something.

Here's the key: "We will again ask our federal counterparts to take the steps necessary to extend employment insurance benefits to those taking family caregiver leave." The federal government has 10 provinces, and they try to have uniformity in health care, all these various things. Now Ontario's coming in—it's the largest province, about 13 million—and says, here's another thing for you to do; here's another requirement.

Who pays for unemployment insurance, by the way? It's insurance. The employers pay for it. So this is a tax. This is a tax on employers. It's a tax on jobs.

Now I want to repeat for the third time—let's keep this in focus. We agree with the compassionate concern, the intent, the validation of that, the sincerity. They promised it. Here's another one of those promises that doesn't deliver. The intent is there, we all agree. I'm sure my friend from Trinity–Spadina agrees; in fact, I hope he speaks after me. But the fact is, this is so shallow, it's actually—it gives away the whole way this current government works. This is the problem I have.

It's like, right now, debt. When I think of the debt in the province of Ontario, that's future taxes on the children. They're looking good today for things they're going to have to pay for tomorrow—your future, the cost of university, the cost of education, the lack of jobs. These are the things that aren't being taken care of by this government. It all, to me, comes to a crystal-clear impression of what this government is not doing.

I did read in detail the bill. Here are some sections—there are some questions that need to be answered. I know the minister's here, and the minister's listening. I'm certain the minister will have public hearings on this.

The bill itself, for the public here, is one page. The cover's bigger than the contents of the bill. There's a section two, subsection two, and it says here—it outlines all the people who are entitled, and I'll just go through it because I have a few minutes here:

"(1) The employee's spouse;

"(2) A parent, step-parent or foster parent of the employee or the employee's spouse;

"(3) A child, step-child or foster child of the employee or the employee's spouse;

"(4) A grandparent, step-grandparent, grandchild or step-grandchild of the employee or the employee's spouse;

"(5) The spouse of a child of the employee;

"(6) The employee's brother or sister …"

Now here's a really interesting one—it's broad and encompassing: the next-door neighbour. Well, it doesn't say that, but it says, "Any individual prescribed as a family member for the purpose of this section." So the next-door neighbour—why wouldn't you want to care for the elderly person next door? I agree with that. Well, you can stick that in here.

0910

My point is, this bill—who was asking for it? Who's putting the demands on this, on the small business? I think of my brother-in-law, who's got a delicatessen in Peterborough. He and his wife work all the time, and they're very skilled. They have a little restaurant component to it. They work hard. They have one or two people who work for them, I think, usually at lunchtime and stuff like that. I wonder: Would they be entitled to take the time off because they're—why not, if the cat was sick or the dog was sick? Let's not trivialize. Let's not trivialize here. This pet may be the only contact—now, I don't want to accuse them of being insensitive, but to some people who are living alone, their only care is for their pets.

I think this bill needs hearings very seriously because it's so loose, and really what they're doing is they're blaming Stephen Harper. They're blaming Stephen Harper. That's who they're blaming.

Not only this; this puts a bit of an implication on the health care system. You can't get to a doctor now because you have to go to emergency, but they have to get some kind of certificate. You have to go to the doctor and verify that—you can't just say, "My spouse isn't feeling well." So now you've got a cost to the system, which is already overstrained.

We've got a deficit in Ontario of over $16 billion. I hope it's going to be smaller in the budget next week. It probably is, because what they usually do is they super-inflate numbers to $16 billion, $17 billion. Then they're going to come in with the budget: "It's $10 billion. What a great job we've done."

Look, there are 600,000 people—and Don Drummond told you that if you don't do something, you're going to double the deficit. Right now, that whole deficit discussion is being ignored, but here's the issue: Right now, we have the lowest interest rate in recent history. The cost of servicing our debt now is just around $10 billion. If this interest does pick up—because interest always has to be greater than inflation, and inflation is creeping up. It's about 2.4%. Interest always has to be higher than inflation, so if interest goes up, the cost of debt is going up. If it goes up 1%—let's say it's 2% now. If it goes up 1%, that's a 30% increase in the cost of debt.

I look at that whole scandal around Ornge that we talked about yesterday. My head and my heart were both aching, to think of how much money has been stolen out of the health care system under the watch of Dalton. I almost get passionate about this when it starts to bother me so much inside. I try to sort of move back once in a while and not get so serious.

But I do realize—now, I'm going to care. There were a very good number of questions asked yesterday by the leader of the NDP, Andrea Horwath. No, it was France Gélinas, pardon me, the member from Nickel Belt. And these were about the lack of hours of care through the CCACs. The minister kind of bobbed and weaved: "We've put more money in. We've doubled the money." You've doubled the cost and you've got half the service. That's what they've done.

France Gélinas, the wonderful critic in health care, much like Elizabeth Witmer—they're both very focused on that. Here's the issue: It was clearly stated by a critic that knows her details that people—and they mentioned specific references to specific families. I don't want to use this. She did a wonderful job yesterday. What they're saying is—she came back with things like, "Well, we have a new strategy. It's called Aging at Home." It's actually called aging alone, because there is no care at home with them. They're cutting back the CCACs. They're told, or directed, that there wasn't enough money—because of the deficit, because of overspending on other things, helicopters and things like that—for

hours for home care. Now we're going to give them more time off.

Actually, what the people of Ontario want is a job and a sense of security around them and a vision for Ontario. McGuinty's vision is to open up more casinos to help hurt the poor even more. I think in every area that I look at, Mr. Speaker—it's good to see a new Speaker in the chair there. Everything I've watched in the last several months, it's going downhill at a rapid speed and accelerating. The people of Ontario—it's in everything. Don Drummond said there's 300-plus recommendations. Here's some help: Grab one of these life rafts and start to pull yourself out of the hole. But what have they done? They've kept digging.

This is another example of trying to promise everything to everyone. Here, you can have a day off work and then you can have home improvements for seniors, but there's no money in it; you have to spend $10,000.

There isn't one thing that I can see that makes any sense and the people of Ontario need to start paying very close attention, with the budget next week, to what their plan for the future really is. They threw this out—this promise on Bill 30—during the election, that we're going to improve caregiver time off. They didn't put one cent into it. They've spent more money printing paper than they will helping the people in their homes. This is the truth.

And if you read it, even their pets will be covered, I think. It's not clearly in here but I'm pretty sure it will be, because who wouldn't want to? Who wouldn't want to help the pets? I put that for the minister to respond to. Is she going to deny the—

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Move an amendment.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister, are the pets here?

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it says "any individual"—so it's not a pet—"as a member, for the purpose of this section," as described—well, it's open to interpretation in the regulations. Again, we need to clarify this.

First of all, Tim Hudak and our critic, Randy Hillier, have made it eminently clear that we're completely supportive of the intent. That's not to be disputed. There's a lack of clarity. They should have taken a bit more time to draft this up. I know it was an election promise, and how many election promises have you actually kept? None. Zero.

Even the other day he promised—this is why I'm getting calls at my constituency office. You made a promise on—after Don Drummond issued the report, he said, you know, he stood there, sort of—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Could I ask the member to kind of stick to the topic? You're drifting a little bit.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you. I respect the comments of the Speaker. I think this whole idea that I was wandering, it gives me this kind of—the thing is that I'm concerned.

I think some of these people could be off work in Ontario because of stress. And what would the stress be? Because their children have no future. There are no jobs for the kids graduating from university and college. Tell me in your response, what are the jobs of the future? Not some job at a casino. Who are you kidding? All these jobs in energy and renewable energy are a good example of why they're in stress, so it is related to the bill.

What would the stress be? Well, they're going to have 50,000 jobs in the green energy. There are reports that say you actually lose jobs. Now, what are the jobs? Cutting the grass around the solar panels, driving a lawn mower. After they've welded together all the towers and that for the wind turbines, who's working around those turbines? I don't see anybody standing around. There's nobody working around them.

I see the Minister of Energy's here as well.

This stressful society in the last several years—when people look at the eHealth scandal, they get stressed; when they look at the Ornge helicopter issue, they get stressed. Then they get worrying about their future. Then they take time off work and the employer has to pay unemployment insurance premiums, which is a tax on jobs. It's a vicious cycle. There's no plan for the future of Ontario. In fact, I would like to say that in the—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I consider the member from Durham a very good friend of mine, but he is kind of wandering here a little bit. I know he wants to get back on topic—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock.

Mr. Jeff Leal: —because he has something very articulate to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I must confess, he is certainly skirting around the issue. He has points that are related but sometimes he drifts. So I would ask the member once again, try to stick to the script, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and out of the deepest respect—I also respect the member from Peterborough.

Now, the member from Peterborough, let's say, for example, he met with the horsemen from Peterborough who are all upset because they're losing their jobs. Why? Because of his lack of action. Now they're going to be stressed and they're going to take time off. Who's paying them? Now they're going to close the casino that they work at, some of them. Look—

Mr. Jeff Leal: They're not going to close the casino. They're going to move it into the city.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order.

0920

Mr. John O'Toole: For the record, I want to repeat what the member from Peterborough said: It's a commitment he made today that they're going to keep the casino at Kawartha Downs open and—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Oh, now the member from Peterborough—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now at least he's starting to disclose the plan, the secret plan—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. The member from Peterborough must refrain from his comments if he wants the member from Durham to stick to his script.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. John O'Toole: I feel a certain amount of stress, when the member from Peterborough withdrew, how he's starting to feel conflicted now. He's got to feel conflicted, because I know he wants to help the people in Peterborough. I know that.

For instance, small business—my brother-in-law Sam at the deli—is all that I'm talking about. You would know—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yeah, exactly. My point is, these are people.

I want to go back. The strategy in society today, in summary, is this: We have an aging population in Ontario. There's evidence that people are living longer, and in health care you consume all of your money in the last 20% of your life. The higher the age group gets, 80 to 90—they spend about $70,000 a year per person. To stay in a long-term-care home is about $60,000 per bed—per bed.

They haven't added one bed, not one. What they've done is they've regulated retirement homes. Now retirement homes don't have one cent of provincial money in them. What they're going to do is they're going to increase the cost of retirement homes. How much does a retirement home cost? I know first-hand. It's between $3,500 and $7,000 a month for a retirement home.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You've got to be a millionaire, for God's sake.

Mr. John O'Toole: Exactly. So the people of Ontario have every reason to be concerned that this bill is just a false shell. You open it up and there's nothing inside it. It's another broken promise by this government. And what are they going to do? They're going to blame Stephen Harper for not paying these people that are off unemployment insurance. Why would that not be the case for all of Canada, then? So you think that Premier McGuinty, who can't run this province, is going to start running the country?

Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I want to repeat, because our leader makes sure that we would implement this in a fashion that would be a commitment you could trust. So to me, this debate this morning comes down to one word: trust. The word is "trust." Can you trust them to deliver? That home renovation tax credit: You can't get it. The 30% student deduction: You can't get it.

To me, all of this paper comes down to the single word "trust." Trust Premier McGuinty and the Liberals to give you unpaid time off for eight weeks—and you must take it a week at a time. Not for a doctor visit—no, you can't take a day off; you have to take it in blocks of entire weeks. This is another piece of good intention poorly executed, and that explains this government to a T.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Danforth.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Close enough. The member from Davenport. Thank you, Speaker.

I was listening to the member from Durham and, you know, I was following along. For the most part it made sense to me, particularly when he called this act a bit of a false shell. It's obviously something that we will support. It moves in the right direction when we start to talk about improving employment standards. But the truth is that people in this province are very stressed out, and I also agree with the member from Durham, who stated that and said that people are also stressed out in their workplace.

What's been happening in this province is that labour standards are going further and further down. When I talk to people in my riding of Davenport, people are stressed out that they can't find work. When they do find work, it's not full-time; it doesn't pay the bills. I was speaking to someone the other day who is about my age and is still living at home with his parents because there's just simply not a job market out there that will employ him full-time.

What we really need to do is make sure that people in their workplace are supported to stand up and speak out if their workplace is unsafe. But I think what has happened in this country around EI—the fact that most people are not eligible for it; the fact that minimum wage is not keeping up with the cost of living; the fact that our welfare system is so dreadful in this province—means that people will not speak out. People cannot afford to take sick leave even if they want to, and that's a real concern.

I also heard the member from Durham say that this report probably cost more than the actual implications of implementing it. We need to spend more money on the people, on enforcing labour standards in this province, than we do writing the papers that we create these things on.

So I will be supporting this, but I do think we need to make sure that we actually have inspectors coming around workplaces and making sure that they're safe workplaces for the employees who are there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? Minister.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Thank you, Speaker. I just wanted to join the conversation. I wish I had more than two minutes.

I wanted to comment on what the member for Durham said. It was a very entertaining speech, and certainly I think it's academy-worthy, indicating his support of pet coverage. But this is a really serious issue, and I think there are certainly enough families across this province that we've heard from who are currently trying to balance the struggle they have, balancing a very sick family member with retaining their job. We've heard from

caregivers; we've heard from a variety of HR professionals across this province.

I understand that he really hasn't followed the bill all that closely based on his comments. So I just want to remind him that there are personal emergency leaves right now that provide a short-term leave that would help a family. They have 10 calendar days that they can use. There's also a family medical leave, but that's in case of a very serious medical condition where there's a significant risk of death within 26 weeks.

We've identified a gap. There's a gap in the current leaves of absence under the Employment Standards Act. It doesn't currently provide a long-term, job-protected leave for employees who want to care for a family member with a serious medical condition that requires care or support. This is in the case where there's no risk of imminent death. It's a very serious issue.

When we made the announcement, we had a young woman come forward with a very sick mother. She had to leave her job to help her mother get through all those doctors' appointments. It was very serious to her. She lost her job. It was something that she loved doing, but she was torn between caring for somebody she loved and keeping her job.

This is about providing compassion. You started out when you had that conversation at the beginning. I appreciate that you believe that there's good intent, and I would like to encourage you to do what the member from Nickel Belt did. She provided some very thoughtful comments on nurse practitioners. I'd encourage you to do the same thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Comments and questions?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I would just like to share a couple of comments with regards to my reflection upon what our member from Durham shared with us this morning. He is an absolute study in debate, and I certainly appreciate his perspective and the manner in which he brings such eloquent points across in this chamber. I congratulate him for that.

But, you know, he brings up a very good point. I represent an absolutely wonderful rural riding, and when we talk about the government strategy for aging at home, I think they've been totally void of understanding real issues. I have a 96-year-old grandmother who lives in rural Ontario on the farm still. She's very independent, but in terms—she needs her CCAC. But in terms of aging at home, the reality of rural Ontario is, when the roads are closed, who's going to get there to help them on a cold winter day?

There are so many things that are suspect. We're cautiously sharing our support for this because we're suspicious that the minister hasn't really consulted with a lot of people. We've just heard from across the floor that they spoke to a lot of people. We're quite interested to know who those folks are. The fact of the matter is, this is a very serious issue. People should be able to take leave and support the people that mean the most to them and fill their hearts because they've given so much. But the fact of the matter is, as I said, we're cautiously—how do I say this? We're cautiously offering support because the fact of the matter is, we feel there needs to be more consultation, and we actually urge the minister to withdraw this bill from second reading and work with the opposition parties to create a select committee to investigate and collect evidence that would support the introduction and passage of this bill based upon merit, not posture.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I do agree with the member from Durham on one thing, and that is that people are stressed out. They're probably stressed out in this Legislature and outside of this Legislature. The real stress, in my view, is income-related. More and more people are becoming poorer and poorer than ever.

The problem with this bill, as much as it is a nice gesture, is that people will be able to take a leave, a protected leave, but it will not be paid by anybody. This is not, as the member from Durham says, a tax on the employer; this is going to be taxing on those individuals who will be pressed to take care of somebody in their own home, but it's not a tax on the employer. It's a huge tax on the individual that is going to have to take time off work to take care of somebody, and that's the dilemma that people are going to be facing. That's where the real stress is going to be.

We haven't touched on reprisals against people who want to take time off, and there will be reprisals from the employer when someone asks to take time off to take care of one of their own. That is for sure. That's going to happen.

But when I hear the member from Durham saying, "We've got a better plan," I don't know what that plan is. And when the member from Durham says it's a matter of trust, I say, "Hmm. I've been through Mike Harris's regime, and I don't remember them doing one single little thing for the seniors. Not one little thing."

And while these Liberals haven't funded any long-term care—which is true—nor have they built any long-term-care facilities, do I believe, John, that the Tories are going to do that? No siree. So when you talk about trust and a plan—hmm, I don't know.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham has a two-minute reply.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm really pleased that the member from Davenport—I just want to prove that I did listen to their comments. He said, basically, that people can't afford this. That's basically what he said.

I would say I'm very impressed that the minister was here, and she did say that I—I thought she made a bit of a slam on me there; it wasn't called for. But I'd like her to produce the request that she mentioned, the information from the HR professionals. I'm requesting publicly a copy of those documents. I've not had one call on this, to be honest.

Now, I think the most realistic comment was from the Huron–Bruce member, a good friend and also quite an expert and highly regarded in the agricultural community. I think she hit it when talking about the CCAC and her 96-year-old mother—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Grandmother.

Mr. John O'Toole: —grandmother. Pardon me. Sorry about that—a slip that I could pay for. But the fact is, that's a sentiment that we feel on this side, together with the young families of members that are in the caucuses who have children. I know I have a couple of daughters in England—one just had a baby, and one's expecting one in May—and I have one in Clarington that just had one as well. The little boy was born six weeks premature and was quite unhealthy. Now, we do have parental leave, but between the things—I think her husband, my son, should have been able to take time off, and I'm sure his employer would, because that's the way civil society works. This bill, in itself—good intentions, but actually nothing in it.

I think the member from Trinity–Spadina—and I'm highly respectful of the fact that he even listened to what I said, but the fact is, he said pretty much the same thing as well. He said people simply can't afford it, he said people are stressed, and he said that this bill is a shallow promise.

Well, I can commit to this: Tim Hudak keeps his promises.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to speak to the Family Caregiver Leave Act today. This bill is a step forward in making life easier for those who need care for a family member, but it is a very small step.

Once again, as we've seen in other government bills that have been put forward lately, they have really great names. I'm sure that we all know someone who simply has had no choice but to take time off of work because a family member needs their attention. When it happens, you have no choice; you have to do what you have to do. In such an event, this bill would entitle an employee to up to eight weeks' leave per year to support a family member who has a serious medical condition but is not at risk of death. It is certainly good that the person's job would be protected. Unfortunately, it is only a guarantee of unpaid leave, and for many, that's the kicker.

I just mentioned that the leave is for people who have an ill family member who is not at risk of death. That distinction is made because we already have the family medical leave, which provides up to eight weeks' leave of care for a family member who has a significant risk of death occurring within 26 weeks. In the case, however, of the family medical leave, there has been EI support since 2004. This is not the case for the family caregiver leave.

Without EI support, I have to wonder how many people would be able to take advantage of this leave. It's all well and good to say, "Look, you're going through a difficult time just now. You need to take some time and look after your family. Don't worry, your job will still be here when you come back." It's good for a worker to hear that, but if you're living from paycheque to paycheque, struggling to pay the bills, it doesn't mean much if you're having that leave, and you have no money coming in. No, to make this really meaningful, the government needs to pressure the federal government so that there is some form of income support for those who need to access this leave. So the bill may be once again putting the cart before the horse.

I would also like to take some time to talk about the Employment Standards Act, which this bill seeks to amend. The Employment Standards Act sets minimum standards for employees in Ontario. Some of the workers are members of a trade union. They are, as we would say, organized, and these workers have brought themselves together to act as one. Collectively, they can negotiate contracts and look after each other to ensure that they are not taken advantage of, that they get a fair rate of pay and that adequate attention is paid to their health and safety. But not every worker in this province is unionized. Unfortunately, the laws of our province and the power of employers do not make it easy for workers to exercise their rights and join a union. For those workers, the Employment Standards Act is all they've got; that's it.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you, I've worked in many places where the Employment Standards Act was our only safety net. I can tell you that many, many workers in that situation are not aware of what the minimum standards of employment in Ontario are. Several workers would not even dare to speak up to an employer, because they are fearful or at risk of losing their jobs.

I can also tell you that employers don't exactly go out of their way to make sure that employees know their rights under the ESA or even that it exists. Perhaps a handbook of the ESA would be a suggestion that is made during the committee process of amending the ESA. Making sure that all workers are given one of these handbooks could ensure that all workers would know their rights, and employers would know that they would have to follow the ESA.

The point I want to make is that for an amendment to actually have its full impact, we need to ensure that people know that the provisions exist, and they need to know how to access them. We already know that the Minister of Labour only hears a very small percentage of violations of the Employment Standards Act. Again, I must repeat: There are several workers, especially racialized workers, who will not stand up for themselves for fear of reprisals, and they will not stand up for fear of losing their jobs.

There are several employers out there who are not so worried, because they definitely have enough resumés stacked up in their desks, with Ontarians chomping at the bit to have any opportunity for employment. We know that, no matter what it says in the act, workers are being denied overtime pay, are being paid below minimum wage or are owed wages.

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The Workers' Action Centre has reported that only 4% of workers who are owed wages actually even file claims

under the ESA. Clearly, these are issues with compliance with the act, and there are issues with the ability or reluctance of workers to take advantage of the provisions of the Employment Standards Act. Again, possibly this handbook would ensure that workers know their rights, and it would be a key tool to ensuring that Ontarians are getting a fair deal when going to work each day.

Mr. Speaker, the ministry must take a more proactive role in administering the Employment Standards Act. Don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker: I'm not against employers, because this bill does nothing to protect them either. How could an employer safely ensure that a job will be held if he or she needs to run a business? Will there be any form of insurance policy for them? A small business that relies on possibly only one or two employees will certainly miss them and run into hardships when covering this time when the employees are gone.

Unfortunately, just as this bill is being debated, the government wants to cut $6 million from enforcement at the end of this month. This after promising to invest $10 million a year to hire new employment standards officers and improve compliance with the act. I urge the Minister of Labour, don't undermine this amendment before it's even in place. Do not cut $6 million from the ESA enforcement budget.

Some unionized workers or employees in managerial positions already have written into the contracts provisions that allow them to use sick days to care for family members who are seriously ill; and, as I said, these are not the workers who are going to rely on the Employment Standards Act. No, the workers who need the Employment Standards Act are often those who earn the least, those whose jobs are the most precarious. We have a responsibility to these workers. If they are not being given the opportunity to join a union, then we should at least make sure that we're providing decent minimum standards and make sure that those minimum standards are enforced.

If we're going to be changing the Employment Standards Act, there are other items that we should be thinking of, like increasing the minimum wage for Ontario workers. How can we justify a minimum wage that is below the poverty line? As the gap between rich and poor grows, we simply cannot accept that those at the lowest end of the pay scale do need and deserve a raise. It should be raised to $11 per hour this year and indexed to the cost of living.

Another concern I have with this bill is the term "serious condition." It says that the doctor will decide this, but will he or she be given the proper direction of what that term means? And will this add further burden onto the appeals that are already before the ESA? We see in WSIB, ODSP, CPP cases the backlogs that have been caused due to the fact that a particular doctor did not give an answer that someone liked, no matter which side they're on. We just seem to be always adding another screw to the wheel and hoping that the air will stay in it. And there again, another problem: Who is going to pay the doctor to fill out the note that has been requested? Another burden and time constraint to our very, very busy doctors.

Mr. Speaker, I seem to have found more things wrong with this bill than in the positive nature that I'm sure it was written in. I will once again say that this bill is a very small step in the right direction. We really need to push hard for the EI support for the family caregiver leave, and we need to make sure that workers know about the provisions, that they feel able to access without fear of reprisal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Let me start off by saying that this bill is far from perfect. Only a very limited number of employees will have the personal resources necessary to even be able to access these provisions. That said, it is a step forward, although a very small step forward, and for that reason I will be supporting this bill, in expectation that this is only the first of many other following steps forward and that greater provisions will come in the future.

In Ontario, many families are put in difficult situations. They have seriously ill family members, but the current employment protections do not go far enough to allow them to care for seriously ill family members who are not in a terminal or life-threatening situation. This bill addresses that concern and it creates a provision for a family caregiver to take up to eight weeks of unpaid leave without the fear of losing their job, a regulation that should have been in place years ago and an amendment that will become even more important with our aging population and greater need for family members to pull together to care for loved ones.

As I have said, this bill is weak. It's another half-measure by this government. Probably the most glaring weakness is that there isn't any income support for those taking the leave, meaning that only those with the financial resources will be able to take time away from their jobs to care for their loved ones. This is a weakness, and many people will simply be unable to afford the eight weeks without any income. I don't think I'd be stretching too much to suggest that many families in Ontario today probably would find two weeks' unpaid leave completely unaffordable. But at the very least, this amendment sets the groundwork for future advances, and I'm hopeful that sometime in the next few years there will be the political will to provide income supports for these workers to help ensure that more families can take advantage of this employment protection.

One thing I've not heard but I'd like to hear about would be a cost-benefit analysis of providing income supports in a case like this. I would suspect that the cost to the system would be much less expensive to help cover the income of a family member or spouse for eight weeks, even if it is a percentage of their regular income, than it would be for the government to cover the cost of health care and support workers for the ill family member. We know that many social programs such as this one actually come at a net benefit to the taxpayer, a notable

example being the reports that suggest that full-day kindergarten saves the government money through savings in other programs. I'd certainly like to see an analysis of this—if this could be the case for this program. We know that investing is not only the right thing to do, but it actually maximizes our tax dollars.

I would, of course, be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that the most likely funding source for an income supplement program like this would be through the federal government's employment insurance program, so I will admit that the fault for this shortcoming may not necessarily lie with the provincial government. That said, I hope the Minister of Labour could give her assurances that they will lobby the federal government to make the changes necessary to ensure that this program is accessible to all workers and not just the lucky few who can afford to take an eight-week unpaid absence from their job.

Of course, in an ideal world we wouldn't need a piece of legislation like this. In an ideal world, employers would happily provide their workers with some level of compassionate leave, and I'm sure that some do. But we all know that this is not an ideal world and that, unfortunately, we have to legislate based on the lowest common denominator. With this in mind, I do think, again, that this is a step in the right direction.

Another provision that I do have some concern with is this bill's impact on very small businesses and essential services. As it stands, this bill does not state a minimum number of employees and it does not seem to exempt certain essential sectors, and I do worry that the potential exists for some problems in this regard.

In many communities, "small businesses" is a very literal term. The small stores or other operations may have one or two employees. If one of those employees suddenly takes eight weeks' leave, it does have the potential to pose an undue hardship on the other employees or the business owner. But I know that in these circumstances, most of these small businesses are tight-knit communities and almost like families where the employer would more than likely encourage their employee to take the time to care for their family and return to work when they're able.

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Likewise, I worry about how this would affect essential services in small communities, such as police officers, where, again, there isn't always the staff complement necessary to fill in for a prolonged absence. That said, I'm sure—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There seems to be about six sidebars going on. I'm having difficulty listening to the speaker. If you want to have sidebars, I suggest you go outside. Thank you.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you.

That said, I'm sure these are larger organizations and they will find ways to adapt to find short-term solutions to fill the staff complement.

While I do worry about the impact on smaller staff operations, I'm hopeful that the provisions of this amendment will come under review and that, if there is need to accommodate small business, the government will be agreeable to that in the future.

As happens with all new legislation, there will be hiccups along the way, but I believe this is a good step, and although a minor first step, it does have the potential to have a positive impact on families across the province and an even greater impact when income supports are in place and all the problems are ironed out.

I am hopeful that the committee charged with reviewing this bill will seek submissions from some of the organizations that could be adversely affected by the legislation and propose amendments that they deem necessary to make this a workable plan for Ontario business.

The other thing I'd like to talk about is protection for employers. I think, in particular, of tourist operators in my region. Many of these businesses are what you could call mom-and-pop operations, where the owners do the majority of the work, including cooking, cleaning, renovations and meeting the needs of their guests. Their only employees may be guides or casual positions that are brought on purely by demand, meaning the employee is booked for a particular week because there is a guest who wants a guided trip.

Guides are extremely skilled and knowledgeable individuals whose work simply cannot be filled by someone coming off the street. So, if the guide were to cancel at the last minute and the owner was unable to fulfil the request due to other commitments, such as guiding a group of their own, it leaves the guest unhappy. They talk to their friends and business drops.

Anyone who knows the tourism industry in the northwest knows that business is built on repeat business. A satisfied customer may visit the same lodge for 10, 20 or 30 years. Over the course of that time, in an extremely tough industry to make a living, that's how we lose a lot of business: if we are unable to satisfy a guest for any particular time. I would certainly encourage the committee to ask the tourism industry for their thoughts on this bill.

That said, I think it's important to offer this type of leave. It's important to protect the jobs of people who are facing serious family illness. The problem is that this bill does not go far enough. It has no income protection, and I wonder about it having adequate inspection.

We all know that the current Employment Standards Act is almost a joke. If you have a union, you're okay. If you don't have a union, you've got literally no protection. I've seen that working in the constituency office in my former job, when I worked with the former MPP. There, I helped a man who worked in one of the small communities in my riding. He was working for a year at this company. He was on the management track. He did all sorts of dirty and difficult jobs. He went above and beyond. He received excellent performance reviews, and yet he was let go so that the company could hire the owner's cousin, who had less experience. In that situ-

ation, the Employment Standards Act did nothing to help this individual.

And so, while I will support practically any measure that will strengthen our Employment Standards Act, this bill doesn't go far enough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain and the member from Kenora–Rainy River for their comments.

As the minister indicated before, we have identified a gap in the leaves that we currently have in place. I want to assure them that the government intends to ask the federal government to extend employment insurance to those who would take the new family caregiver leave, if the bill is passed. So the government does intend to ask for EI benefits for this proposed leave.

Going back to the gap, we now have in place the personal emergency leave and the family medical leave, and both have EI support. What the gap intends to address is, for example, if a family member falls ill unexpectedly, one could take advantage of the personal emergency leave, which would give the employee 10 days that they can take from work and would be paid by EI. If the family member was to become terminal, with a significant risk of death occurring within 26 weeks, then the employee could ask for the family medical leave, which would still be covered under EI. Then, let's say—how can I say it?—the family member would undergo an operation and then be recovering; that's when the family caregiver leave would kick in. And we will be asking the federal government—hopefully they will provide EI benefits.

Also the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's an honour again to stand in this chamber and discuss Bill 30 that the government is proposing.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we understand—the member from Durham earlier mentioned the compassion that we have for our families and family members. The member from Kenora–Rainy River put it quite well and eloquently, and the member from York South–Weston obviously has some valid points. But let's be clear about something: This bill has good intentions, but it doesn't—if you truly want to assist, you have to push a little further. You have to do more than just what this government is proposing.

And another theme that I've sort of picked up on—and there's a bit of a pattern being developed here—is that of passing the buck. They try to blame our federal cousins and counterparts for not doing their fair share. Quite obviously, they're not doing their fair share. I mean, it's one thing to be compassionate. We all love our families, we all have seniors and loved ones we want to help and assist. We want them to be comfortable in their own homes, live a life with dignity. But we need to actually look at a bill that's going to provide that kind of requirement. And quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I don't think this bill goes far enough in what the government is trying to propose.

So if you're going to present something that is, again, window dressing—that's all this is. It's a feel-good kind of bill but there's no real substance to it. There's no foundation to it, Mr. Speaker, and that's why I don't think Bill 30 is a bill that I can support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad you got that riding right. I was a little bit concerned about what your comments were going to be today.

But anyway, again, coming from a background that directly deals with individuals that are faced with the challenges of caring for their individuals, dealing with the stresses of every day and helping their family members, this bill definitely doesn't go far enough, and it's unfortunate. We have an opportunity here where we can really do something good for all Ontarians.

If we lived in a perfect world, where we all had good employers, where we all had that good relationship, we wouldn't need this legislation because we would have that ability, we would have that compassion between employee and employer to have that time off when we need it.

But we do have to build something. We do have to present some type of legislation in order to cover those individuals who are not in a union environment, who are not protected through certain regulations and legislation that should be in place. This is the opportunity that we have to help those individuals to take that time off when they need it to care for their family members. And it certainly doesn't go far enough.

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We're saying that you can take up to eight weeks off. Never mind eight weeks, just one week—one week is the decision that people are going to be faced with in order to take that time off for their loved one. They want to have that opportunity; they want to feel safe, like they can take that opportunity without any reprisals. So it's definitely going to be up to this government to make sure that we educate the public of their rights, that they can do this—not just a little ribbon on top of a vote. We have to make sure that they are fully aware of their rights so that they can do this and so we can benefit individuals. But let's take the time to push this and bring it to the level that it needs in order to bring the benefits that are supposed to come from it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Our government does want to give employees the one thing they need the most when their family or loved ones are ill or injured. We want to give them that time off with their loved ones, and that's why we've introduced this legislation, which, if passed, would give up to eight weeks of unpaid leave, job-protected time away from work to care for people and family members with a serious medical condition.

I want to respond to members opposite and how they keep saying that this bill is unworkable because employers won't grant this time off. It's up to eight weeks of unpaid leave. It provides them flexibility, whether the need is one week, three weeks or eight.

Family caregiver leave is a matter of compassion, and it's the right thing to do. At the end of the day, we want to help Ontarians in difficult times. I can't tell you, Speaker, how many times constituents in my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East have come in and said that they're trying, they're struggling, to balance work with caring for an ill or injured family member, and they would welcome this kind of relief, this kind of support from our government. And I would like to think that all parties would be supportive of such a wonderful piece of proposed legislation.

As my colleague from York South–Weston indicated, we will be encouraging the federal government to allow workers to access employment insurance if they take the leave. It's the right decision for people in Ontario, and if passed, the bill would not come into force until July 1, 2012, to give adequate time for employers to transition and to be ready for this very important legislation. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Hamilton Mountain has two minutes to reply.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members from Guelph, Northumberland–Quinte West, Algoma–Manitoulin and Pickering–Scarborough East. It's definitely been an interesting debate happening here this morning, and there seems to be a consensus on this side of the House that it is a good bill; there just needs to be more to it.

I'm happy to hear that the intention is to go forward to get EI, but is that putting the cart before the horse? You know, that's a scary thought. People living paycheque to paycheque—how can they simply afford to just, you know, take up to eight weeks' time off? It sounds great, but most people probably wouldn't be able to afford to do that.

So I am happy to hear that your side will be going after EI. Will the feds come to that? I don't know. I really think that, if we are going to be opening the Employment Standards Act, we need to make sure that we're doing it right. If we're going to do it, let's do it right. The handbook may be a really great tool, making sure that employers are handing these out to the employees so that they know what their rights are. How many employees are actually even going to know that they have the right to this? Is the employer going to say, "Oh, there's new legislation that will help you out"? No. There may be some, because some communities, you know—there are great people out there. There are fabulous, great-hearted people out there, but there are some people who are there for the almighty dollar. They don't care. They have a drawer full of resumés waiting for the next person to take your job if you're not going to be there that day.

Are people going to know their rights? That's my biggest concern about this. I look forward to further debate. I know I will be supporting this. Hopefully we will get the EI to support it also. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate? The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You're doing a wonderful job in the chair today, keeping everybody directly on course and not drifting off too far afield.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to speak on the family caregiver act as the critic for labour for the PC Party. I also am very appreciative that the minister is once again in the House to listen to this debate on Bill 30.

I will start with this, because it's from the minister's own comments in the House this morning. She stated in the House, in her two-minute response to the member from Durham, that the minister had heard from a number of groups, a number of people. HR professionals was one of the groups that she mentioned that they had heard from.

The minister's statements in this House this morning are completely inconsistent with and at odds with what her own ministry personnel have stated to me on two occasions. During ministerial briefings, I asked the minister's political staff and the administrative staff in the ministry with whom they had spoken and what their response had been. The minister's own staff said they hadn't spoken to anybody and that there had been no efforts put forth for anybody to actually demonstrate that there's a need for this bill. So maybe at some point today, the minister could rise and clarify the inconsistency between her words in the House and her staff's words to me in the ministerial briefings.

I think a real crux of this bill is: Where is the demonstrable need? I've heard from the members of the third party, and I've heard from members of the government, about how people are being denied the time off to care for their loved ones.

I'll give you my own personal experience and observations of near 40 years in the workforce. I have never come across somebody who was denied time off for care of their loved ones—never, not once. It has never happened to me, either as a union electrician or a non-union electrician or during my time in retail. Never have I been denied time off.

I heard the members from the third party say things about reprisals and stuff. Reprisals from employers for people who take time off to care for their loved ones—I've not seen that. I guess maybe where I come from, it is a little bit more civil society than some of these other places, but once again, I've not experienced that, Speaker. The minister's staff has not collected any data. That's another great flaw in this bill: It doesn't provide any mechanism to actually collect data, to see if people are indeed being denied any time off or having reprisals for taking time off for caring for their loved ones.

I also think that there are the unseen and the unintended consequences of this bill. At the present time, if I'm an employee in a small business—and I'll say "small business" because most union collective bargaining agree-

ments have mechanisms in place to address family care for their collective bargaining members. But for small business people, the non-union sector, right now there is a mutual and natural check and balance in the arrangement. An employer is not going to want to lose a good employee. They're going to want to keep that good employee. They're going to provide flexibility and latitude for that employee to take time off to care for a loved one. And the employee is also going to be flexible and have some latitude to ensure that the employer is not overly burdened by those actions as well.

Under this act, that natural check and balance, that natural incentive for mutual agreement, is taken off the deck. The cards are no longer there. Now everybody will have up to eight weeks of time off, and it really is, as the member from Durham mentioned, so broad a spectrum. It's not even a sieve; it is just a big, empty net. Anybody can be in there and qualify as part of the family caregiver act to take time off for.

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Now, that on its own may not be a significant problem. But if this government gets its way, and we know—the ministry staff have told me quite clearly that they are pushing and advocating for the federal government to include time off for family caregiving as an insurable EI benefit. Take a look at this. We have this big, broad net: brothers, sisters, mothers, cousins, second cousins, third cousins, next-door neighbours. Anybody can be captured in this act, and you'll be able to take up to eight weeks, if the government has their way, of paid unemployment time off. I think you could make a good, strong case for a defined family member, but not such an expansive group of people.

Also, it doesn't identify what the illness or the injury or the ailment has to be. If somebody is sick with a cold for eight weeks, it would qualify under this bill. If somebody is feeling a little down in the dumps, they would qualify under this bill. We certainly must have in this bill a requirement that the injury or the illness is a significant impairment and prevents that person from, indeed, caring for themselves and requires assistance. But this bill, in my view, Speaker, is nothing but political posturing by the Liberal government. It really—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Oh, how can you say that?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Well, if you were here, Minister, you would have heard my arguments, but you were asleep at the switch once again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member will take his seat. I would suggest that the member does not get personal and sticks to the script—and withdraw that last statement.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

Anyway, Speaker, those are a few of the significant problems with this bill—not just what is today, but what is going to come out of it tomorrow. If the government does indeed get their wish of employment premiums or benefits out of this bill, it really must be tightened up.

I think, if the government was being honest and truthful and not just using this bill as a political-posturing mechanism, that they would define, in this bill, who would qualify, under what conditions they would qualify, and they would also put it right in the bill that they expect that the federal government—or if they're not going to provide that insurable benefit, then cough it up themselves. Put the money where the bill is, Minister. If you really think that this is important, if you really don't believe that it's just a political-posturing bill, put the money in the bill and provide the insurable benefit for those people who need to take time off and provide care for their loved ones.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Trinity–Spadina will get in his seat if he wants to talk.

Mr. Randy Hillier: That would demonstrate—not just to me, but it would demonstrate to everybody in this House, it would demonstrate to everybody in this province—that the Liberals are taking this seriously and not just using it for political posturing.

Once again, they have not collected any data to demonstrate that there is a need for this. There's no empirical—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to thank the member. This will continue at another time.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It is 10:15, and this House stands adjourned until 10:30. Thank you.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce constituents from the agricultural community, specifically the Ontario Harness Horse Association people who are visiting us here today at Queen's Park: Paul Lindsey, Kent Baker, Dave Gibson and Dave Heffering. They and others will be visiting members with respect to the issue facing many of the people in the agricultural community today.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to welcome Kevin and Anne Moynihan, who are joining us from Halifax, Nova Scotia, the in-laws of my staffer Li Koo; and a friend of mine, Janet Henley, who is from north Toronto, the Eglinton–Lawrence riding. It's very nice to have you here.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I just had a wonderful meeting with Family Service Toronto and I'd like to welcome Stefanie Morra, Pearl Mendonça and Madeline Kingston.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'd like to introduce, in the members' east gallery today, Dr. Michael Bell and his daughter, Bianca, who are here with me today. They won a lunch with the MPP. Of course, Dr. Bell was the very distinguished candidate for the Green Party in the 2011 federal election, and we certainly welcome both of them here today.

Also, in the members' east gallery is Mr. Rick Johnson, the former MPP for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock in the 39th Parliament.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. We always warmly welcome all former members.

Further introductions?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome Alex Forgay and Nancy Bell, who are in the gallery. They're the proud parents of Alex Forgay, a page here in our page program from the riding of St. Paul's. Let's please give them a warm welcome. In fact, I think Alex is the page captain today.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'd like to welcome Mr. Richard Helbig and Mr. James Richardson from Aurora.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance. I want to ask the Minister of Finance about his role and that of his ministry in the Ornge scandal. On April 13 of last year, when questions were first raised about the scandal in this chamber and about the irregularities at Ornge, the Minister of Finance stood in his place in response to one of those questions and said this: "I can assure the Legislature and the people of Ontario that the contractual arrangements with Ornge protect the interest of taxpayers unequivocally."

Speaker, given that there's now a criminal investigation into those contractual arrangements, can the minister tell us why he felt so compelled to so vigorously defend this organization? Can he tell us who he got that information from last April?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is aware that we expect the Auditor General's report today. There's a criminal investigation going on that's being conducted by the OPP, and I look forward to the recommendations of the Auditor General, as does our government. I would remind the member opposite—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —that the OPP investigation will—I'm not certain when that will be completed, but that will also assist all of us in understanding what went on there.

Clearly, there were challenges that we were not aware of at the time, in April. I welcome the Auditor General, as well as the OPP investigation, to assist us in getting closer to understanding what precisely occurred at Ornge over the course of the last number of years—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: It's not enough to say that there's an investigation going on. It's not enough to say that the Auditor General will report the results of his investigation. The question that I put to the minister was very specific. I want to know now who's investigating the Ministry of Finance for the information that they gave the minister so that he could stand in this place and say that, unequivocally, he can assure the taxpayers that the terms of the contractual arrangements are in the best interest of the taxpayer.

Will the minister now stand in his place and tell us who gave him that information that allowed him so boldly to stand in his place and say that he could unequivocally assure taxpayers that their best interests are being met?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Later today, the Minister of Health will be bringing forward legislation that will contain the government's entire response to this very—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The convention is, when I stand, it gets quiet.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Health will be bringing forward new legislation today. We've signed a new performance agreement. The OPP is key, in my view—and I think it's the view of all members of the House—to understanding what precisely went wrong.

To the member opposite, I do regret saying that last year. There's no question. We on this side of the House are confident the OPP will do the kind of investigation that the Minister of Health has asked them to. I'm confident that the legislation the minister is bringing forward today is appropriate. I'm confident in the Auditor General, and I'm confident the OPP will help us get to the bottom of this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, finally there is one cabinet minister here who actually regrets that he said what he said about this issue, and I want to commend him for that. But there are many others who have not accepted responsibility, and that speaks to the need for having a select committee of the Legislature where people can come forward and tell us exactly what they knew. The OPP investigation won't go there; the Auditor General's scope will not include that. There are many front-line people who want to come and tell us what happened and what must be done to restore confidence in our air ambulance service.

I want to know from the minister now, in the same spirit that he admitted that he was wrong when he made the statement in April: Will he stand in his place and admit that we need a select committee, and will he support a select committee of the Legislature to get to the bottom of this?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Let me first of all say to the member opposite and all Ontarians that our Minister of Health has taken every appropriate and necessary step in a timely fashion to get at the bottom of this most unfortunate set of circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, let's just review what we've done. First of all, the Auditor General will be reporting today. I look

forward to his recommendations, as does the Minister of Health, and she will act on those recommendations.

Second of all, we asked the OPP to come in and look at this because, quite frankly, the member opposite and others know that what went on here could possibly—and we don't know for certain. We'll wait for their investigation. We will learn things that nobody had access to, I suspect, as a result of this. We have taken all the appropriate steps in as timely a fashion as is possible. I'm confident the Auditor—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

1040

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is also to the Minister of Finance. The Auditor General's report, as you've just indicated, is going to be released about an hour from now. The Minister of Health—as you know, and we all know if we're in cabinet—has had the report in her hand for several weeks. She knows what it will say, and that's probably why she's not here today. She knows it will say that she—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member knows that we do not reference people's attendance in the House, by tradition.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: She knows it will say she had greater oversight ability than she has been telling the public, the media and the members of this House. Who—I say to the Minister of Finance, through the Speaker—made the decision to say that the minister didn't have the oversight abilities which the auditor says she does?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I look forward to the Auditor General's report today, but more importantly, I look forward to the legislation the minister will bring forward today. Most importantly, I ask that member and the party opposite: Will they support that legislation? Because the Minister of Health has acted in the interest of all Ontario taxpayers in a comprehensive and timely fashion. She has responded in a situation that, in my view, is unprecedented—certainly something that I have never seen. I have confidence in her ability to deal with the Auditor General's report. I look forward to the introduction of her legislation today, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the support of the official opposition for that legislation as quickly as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, through you again to the Minister of Finance: I think, again, we're hearing a minister and a government who are more focused on issues management than actually getting to the bottom of the scandal at Ornge.

I'm going to give the Minister of Finance another opportunity to answer to this House. If the decision to have the minister pretend she lacked oversight powers for Ornge came from the Premier's office staff—who were, as we now know, briefed on the alarming and intricate web of Ornge businesses—I ask the minister, how are they being held accountable?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have confidence that the Auditor General of Ontario will present us with a full and comprehensive report. I have confidence in the Ontario Provincial Police, that their criminal investigation will result in an appropriate response from them as to whether or not criminal activity took place. I have great confidence in the Minister of Health and the way she has handled this, Mr. Speaker. It has been a difficult issue. The opposition is now on a fishing expedition.

I'm looking forward to the introduction of legislation this afternoon that the minister will bring to this House, and I look forward to the support of that member and her colleagues for that legislation, because what's important to Ontarians is that we move forward and we correct the challenges that were there. The Minister of Health is doing just that, Mr. Speaker, and I have confidence in the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, we also have confidence in the Auditor General. But we know that the scope of his investigation is limited, and that's why we, again, want to make sure that we have a select committee to get to the bottom of what happened at Ornge.

The auditor is going to say that the minister had the power to oversee Ornge and step in and actually do something to prevent the scandals there. If the Minister of Health is not willing to acknowledge that, and if she's not going to honour the word she gave to the members of this House to support a select committee, then I ask the member, the Minister of Finance opposite, is she prepared to be held accountable, as a cabinet minister should be, and do the honourable thing and resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, our Premier, our government and every member on this side of the House has full confidence in the Minister of Health. She has taken appropriate action in a timely fashion. She called in the Auditor General. She called in the OPP. She has dealt with an unprecedented situation. They talk a good game, Mr. Speaker.

The member opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A reminder that when I stand, we do get quiet and don't use it as an opportunity to throw in some last jarbs, please.

Interjection: Barbs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yeah, barbs.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The party opposite refuses to acknowledge that public accounts meets next week. We'll call witnesses. We'll deal with this.

This issue is a challenging one. It is rife with all kinds of unprecedented situations. The Minister of Health has

dealt with every one of them, in our view, properly, appropriately and timely, something—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —the calibre, the type of minister she is is something we never saw in that government. We're proud of her. We stand behind her. We're going to rebuild this thing and make sure all Ontarians are satisfied that we've taken the right steps.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: To the Acting Premier: On March 5, the Minister of Health promised, "If it is the will of this Legislature that there be a select committee ... I will, of course, be fully supportive of that."

Yesterday, a majority of elected representatives in this Legislature voted to strike an all-party select committee to get to the root of the debacle at Ornge. My question: Will the Acting Premier abide by the will of this Legislature and promise to strike that select committee today?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to update members on a meeting of the public accounts committee that was held this morning where it was confirmed that, on March 28, as well as April 4 and April 18, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, a standing committee of this Legislature, will be holding hearings on Ornge. It's going to begin in the morning of March 28 with the Auditor General briefing the committee on the contents of his report. In the afternoon, the committee will have the opportunity—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shouting people down is not the tradition of this place.

Hon. John Milloy: In the afternoon, the committee will hear from the Deputy Minister of Health, as well as Ron McKerlie, the acting CEO of Ornge.

I also understand that members brought forward, including the New Democratic Party, a list of witnesses which will be discussed later on during the subcommittee meeting.

There is a standing committee of this Legislature, one which is respected, one which is known—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Evidently the government will ignore the will of this House, just as it has ignored countless whistle-blowers and its own powers of investigation under the performance agreement until the debacle at Ornge made headline news.

Here's what one of those headlines said under George Smitherman in December. He wrote, " ... the ministry did not conduct proper oversight ... it is a commentary on my successors and the ministry." Today, he asks, "What did the minister do? Let's call them what they are—the funder. What did sugar daddy do?"

Does the Acting Premier agree with the former health minister's characterization, and will he promise to strike a select committee today?

Hon. John Milloy: I don't think the member recognizes, as a new member, that he is—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland will come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —that he is, in fact, attacking a standing committee of this Legislature, which is chaired by the opposition.

All members from all sides of the House, members from all parties, unanimously agreed that the public accounts committee would look into the Ornge situation. They have asked the Auditor General to come forward, they have senior officials coming forward, and they'll be meeting later this week to discuss other witnesses that will come forward.

The standing committees of this Legislature have unbelievable power when it comes to summoning witnesses and looking into every corner of an—

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Mr. Speaker, we're not attacking anybody. We want the truth in this House for once and for all. Today, the Auditor General is going to give us that truth, and it's expected that he will highlight the fact that the Minister of Health had the power to open the books at Ornge but did not use it. On top of that, her ministry ignored the warning signs from accountants and employees blowing the whistle and from members of this Legislature.

Does the Acting Premier think that somebody who hasn't done their job should keep it?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the member will not take yes for an answer. He is standing here today and talking about an Auditor General's report and his desire to have a committee of this Legislature look into that report. Mr. Speaker, a committee of this Legislature, chaired by the opposition, is looking into this report. As I said yesterday, far be it from me to meddle in the internal affairs of another party, but I'm sure that if the member speaks to the whip, he can be subbed in to ask questions of public accounts, which is meeting on March 28.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is introducing legislation this afternoon, and I look forward to the support of the NDP and the Conservatives as we move forward with legislation to address concerns about the Ornge situation.

HOME CARE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Your government continues saying that you're increasing funding to home care, yet in our constituency offices in Hearst, Kapuskasing and Timmins, we literally

get dozens of calls every week about people who are being given reduced services from home care.

I want to give you an example. We have Rollande Dumaresq, who's blind and who lives in Kapuskasing. She was getting a day and a half a week where somebody would come in and do her personal care, her bathing, her light housekeeping and her meal preparation. She gets a call last Wednesday saying that that's now going to be reduced down to 0.5 hours per day, two days a week. How is Rollande able to stay at home independently if you're continually cutting the services that she needs to be able to stay there?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, it's difficult for me to respond on a specific case. I will take that information and relay it to the Minister of Health on that specifically.

What I can tell the member opposite is that we have invested more than 1.1 billion additional dollars in our Aging at Home strategy.

The other thing I can share with the member opposite is that I do concur there's more to be done. He's right about that. I met with a constituent yesterday who just had his services increased. He has MS. It was well publicized in our local media. Those cases are happening as well.

So we'll look at that individual case to have a better understanding of what happened in that circumstance. We've invested more than $1.1 billion, but there is more to do. I acknowledge that and concur with the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the Deputy Premier: It shouldn't take a constituent having to call their MPP in order to deal with what needs to be done automatically in our health care system. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

The other one is Judith Moses. Judith is a frail individual who lives in the city of Timmins. She is a person who is frail and is not able to do much of what she needs to do at home. She needs services every day in her home to prepare her meals, to do the things that need to be done for her to be able to live independently. She's incontinent at night. She needs somebody to change the bed. Now she goes from seven days a week to two. How is she to stay in her home independently if you're going to be reducing those services?

Will you commit to increasing the funding to those services, or doing the shift in resources, in order to make sure that people are able to live at home independently and don't have to call their MPP to get their services?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, Mr. Speaker, it's difficult for me to respond to an individual case. I'll undertake to follow up with the Minister of Health on that.

But I would like to point out to the member opposite, and colleagues in the Legislature, that our 14 community care access centres have helped more than 200,000 people go to home from hospital. Some 150,000 seniors are living safely in their community; 1,600 children with complex chronic diseases are being assisted every day; 23,000 dying people have the ability to stay at home with their families. Thousands of people find the different health care services they need and which are provided to more than 50,000 children.

Mr. Speaker, there are always going to be circumstances, unfortunately, like the member raises. I also see circumstances that are the opposite, where services have gone up, but I do undertake to look into that specific case. Ideally, we want to ensure—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I appreciate the offer to look independently into these particular cases. We've already done so with our CCAC. But here's what the problem is: There's $116 million a year for the northeastern Ontario CCAC. It covers Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, North Bay and every community going north. The issue is, there's not enough money to go around. We have an increasing, aging population who have a deeper need year over year, and there are more people going into the system. So what is the CCAC doing? It's saying, "Listen, we're going to try to reduce services to those people whom we think we can do that with so that we can increase services to those people who are in higher need." The long and the short of the story is that people are going to fail as a result of that. So what I'm looking for from you is a commitment through this budget process that in fact you're going to do something to deal with making sure that people can stay at home independently and have a system that works for them.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We already have that system, Mr. Speaker; I remind the member of that.

I hope the member and his party opposite will support the proposals that the Minister of Health has made public about how we're going to fund health care across the range of services. I would point out that, yes, there will be some things in the budget around home care. But what troubles me is that that member and his party voted against every home care initiative in our past budgets. They voted against, for instance, 10,000 new nurses.

They will pick out individual cases, which is fair. We'll follow up on those. We'll also point out cases where people are staying at home. I've pointed out one individual in my riding, whom I'd never met before, who has MS. He has been able to stay at home for eight years as a result of increasing services. This government and party have the right plan. My hope is, that member and his party will have the courage to support it when the budget is brought—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question: the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I have a very serious question for the Deputy Premier, and I think every member of this assembly deserves a straight and very clear response. Can the Deputy Premier tell this House the secret location of the bunker that the Minister of Health and the Premier are hiding in today?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I find that the member's question is inappropriate and not to the con-

ventions of this place. I will ask her to ask her supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: There has been a stunning and appalling lack of leadership between the minister and the Premier. They missed a vote in this House last night to have a select committee, and I want to know—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This will be a warning that if another mention of someone's attendance is made, I will skip your question and move on.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Mr. Speaker, the autism intervention program is delivered through nine regional service providers to children on the severe end of autism spectrum disorder. This program is a lifeline to children and families struggling with autism. My question is this: What evaluation is done of this program to ensure that children with autism are receiving the highest-quality and most effective treatment?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, as always, I appreciate the question from the member opposite. It gives me the opportunity to remind everyone in the Legislature of our investments to help families that have kids with autism. In fact, since 2003, when this government first came into power, we have more than quadrupled autism investment, to a total of $186 million annually this year alone. I should mention, as well, last year's new investment of $25 million specifically for ABA treatment, which is an important form of treatment that I believe approximately 8,000 new children with autism will be able to avail themselves of. That is a new program.

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We will continue to meet with experts and service providers, as well as with parents of children and youth with autism, to make sure that we provide the best possible services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: It would appear that the reports are compiled outlining the number of children entering and leaving the program. However, evaluations of how the children responded to the treatment and the effectiveness of the programs are not being completed, in spite of the requirements for this evaluation under the program guidelines.

The minister has received correspondence from concerned parents, including an email to MPPs documenting this issue on March 15. When will the minister commit to evaluating these programs so that the best practices can be determined and children with autism are receiving the highest quality of care?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It is a good opportunity, actually, for me to mention that not only does there exist a process of appeal if parents with children and youth with autism feel that the treatment provided to them could be altered or improved, but importantly—and I think we all appreciate that parents do want to know how their children are progressing, the impact of the treatment that they're receiving, the treatment and services that best meet their needs. We are establishing an autism spectrum disorders clinical expert committee to accomplish exactly what the member opposite is asking for and to provide advice to the ministry on effective interventions, emerging research and best clinical practices, so that the experts, on an ongoing basis, can assure the parents that their children and youth are getting the care they require.

USER FEES

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Minister, it was recently announced that the Ministry of Transportation would be phasing in incremental increases on a number of various MTO services, such as replacing lost drivers' licences, issuing permits for off-road vehicles and plate validation renewals.

These fees have been around for decades, as we all know. Ontarians understand that when they use certain services, a reasonable fee is involved to cover the cost of providing that service.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Do these increases ensure that MTO's fee structures remain fair for the taxpayers of Pickering–Scarborough East and all Ontarians, while allowing priority investments to be made in the future for our transportation infrastructure?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Pickering–Scarborough East for the question. Indeed, these changes do safeguard that Ontario's fees remain fair for all types of road users.

The fact of the matter is, the last time these fees for automobile validation renewals were raised was in 1997, 15 years ago, when the members for Halton, Oxford, Durham, Oshawa, Newmarket–Aurora, Haldimand–Norfolk, York–Simcoe and Wellington–Halton Hills, all Conservatives, voted to raise them.

Another fact is that inflation alone over the past 15, 20 and 25 years has led to many of these fees being critically below the cost of the services they are designed to cover. That difference is something that taxpayers ultimately end up having to absorb, and that disparity only grows over time.

Rather than subsidizing someone else's driver's licence replacement—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —or snowmobile—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

I remind members that when I say thank you, that is the last word. I would like you to finish the wrap-up, and then you sit down.

Supplementary?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Minister. I can't think of many services in Ontario where the cost of those services is the same as or less than they were 20 years ago, in 1992. Car washes, theatre tickets and newspapers cost significantly more nowadays than they did 20 years

ago, even though these things have changed very little, if anything, in two decades.

I think most taxpayers would agree that essentially subsidizing other people's things like snowmobile permits is not necessarily an efficient or fair use of their tax dollars. I know the PC Party disagrees with that, and we all know they are for keeping unsustainable subsidies in place these days.

Can the minister assure Ontarians that Ontario fees will not become an undue disadvantage relative to other provinces in our country?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member raises some interesting parallels. Our fees are being brought more into line with the national average but will remain lower than most, even in 2015.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to passenger vehicle validation fees, right now in New Brunswick, for example, the fee is $172; in British Columbia, it's $142; in Manitoba, it's $119; in Quebec, it's $104; in Nova Scotia, it's $100; in Ontario, it is $74. In 2015, the maximum fee in Ontario will be $98, still below all of the above.

There are some tough choices that lie ahead, but when faced with the choice between supporting better health care, better education and better roads, or supporting millions in subsidies for racetracks and snowmobile permits, unlike the party opposite, our party will choose better health care—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker. Through you to the Deputy Premier: The Minister of Health says that new legislation to increase oversight at Ornge is coming today, but she knows that the auditor already found she had the oversight powers to step in.

The reason Ornge is in the mess it is today is because Minister Matthews did not have the good judgment to act in response to warnings about spinoff companies stealing valuable health care dollars, or of cooked books, or the almost daily revelations of crew and patient safety being compromised.

Why change the legislation when the problem is the minister who oversaw the scandals at Ornge and did nothing?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, this government welcomes the Auditor General's report. We welcome the OPP investigation. Clearly, the new legislation the minister is bringing in today is designed to deal with a circumstance that had never happened before. What is important is that the minister has acted in a timely fashion—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: She has, first of all, ensured—and I know all Ontarians agree, contrary to what the member opposite suggested—that we have the best paramedics, the best air ambulance service around. All those steps have been appropriate, and I look forward to his support of the minister's legislation when she introduces it later—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: To the Deputy Premier again: Improving oversight only works when you can trust the people doing the oversight. The minister and top Premier's office staff were given a 30-page briefing note about what Ornge was up to. Even when they are spoon-fed the information, they do nothing.

The minister's failure to step in when she could shows her bad judgment. She no longer has the trust of Ontarians. She cannot fix the problem because she is the problem. Why hasn't she resigned?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Minister of Health has dealt appropriately, timely and reasonably, and has done all the right things to make sure that this never happens again. I would suggest, with respect, that the people of Ontario have confidence in that minister, as does every member on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. I have had the opportunity to serve in public life for some 23 years in a variety of capacities, and I am proud of the response to a very difficult circumstance.

I look forward to the Auditor General's report later today. We look forward to receiving the OPP investigation. We look forward, as the minister has said, to responding to all of the Auditor General's recommendations. I put that Minister of Health up against any Tory on that side of the House, and certainly any Tory health minister in the past. One of the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you very much. New question.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan/Parapan American Games. On February 28, I asked the minister about concerns raised by Paul Henderson respecting the games going over budget. The minister said at the time that less than 3% of the budget had been spent and that we are still negotiating venues. Sixty percent of the venues have been clustered from 51 sites to 30 sites.

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Speaker, will the minister tell Ontarians the details of the tendering processes and the actual operating and new construction costs associated with these significant venue changes?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I am very proud of the fact that Toronto 2015 has been doing what's necessary to provide a world-class set of games to Ontario. They have just made a presentation to PASO down in Mexico. They'll be updating their website with some of the details of that presentation. We are undergoing, in regard to finalizing those venue announcements.

I am extremely excited, as should all Ontarians be, about the outstanding contribution that the games will bring in 2015. Over 10,000 athletes and officials will be

attending. More than 15,000 jobs will be brought to the province. This is going to do an amazing amount to promote athleticism, tourism and economic—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —for the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Once again, I didn't get an answer. Speaker, we have two and a half years until the opening of these games. Minister Sousa's Pan Am website states that we will see economic development, as he just said, through building new and improved sport and recreation infrastructure.

With the new clustering of event venues and no public financial accounting to date, Speaker, will this minister tell us where these venues will be located, and where the money for building the new venues, some so far from Athletes' Village, will come from? And when will the financing of these games be shown to the taxpayers of Ontario? We've been asking for a long time. What's the price?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We do know that there's a contribution of over $500 million from the federal government. They're contributing now in terms of the venues and the construction of the venues. They'll be putting up 60%. The municipalities will be putting up 40%. The government of Ontario's putting up $500 million as well, for operating.

There's a total of about $1.4 billion in that budget. That is out there already, in the public domain. We have made every effort to ensure that things are done on time, and Mr. Speaker, we're doing everything we can to make sure it's on budget. I am very, very proud of the efforts and the work done by those individuals.

To the member across the way: I am extremely anxious to get everything out there openly and transparently. It is my desire to do the same, because we want to ensure confidence in what's being done. I'm sure the member across will be just as excited once—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

TOURISM

Mr. Monte Kwinter: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. In the midst of the global economic uncertainty, major cities around the world are competing with one another to corner the tourism market and to remain major destinations for tourists. The city of Toronto is no exception.

As a major metropolis and Ontario's capital, Toronto is constantly competing with overseas markets, and that is why it's important for the government to ensure that Toronto remains a destination of choice for national and international visitors.

Speaker, through you to the minister, what reassurance can this government offer to Toronto residents to let them know that their city is fiercely competing for tourism despite challenges to major economies?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from York Centre for asking.

The member will be happy to hear that Tourism Toronto recently reported that 2011 was a record year for tourism in the city. For the first time ever, the number of sold hotel rooms surpassed nine million—a wonderful record indeed. Visitor spending, including same-day trips, totalled $4.6 billion in the Toronto region, covering a range of businesses and activities while employing 242,000 people in the hospitality and tourism sector.

Our government remains proud and committed to actively engaging new and emerging markets to enhance Toronto's and Ontario's tourism industry, and we will continue to move forward to attract new visitors.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'm happy to see that Toronto has improved its visitor numbers and continues to grow in the tourism market. However, in addition to overnight stays, I'm sure Torontonians would like to know their city is benefiting from tourism that attracts hosting and events. The city is equipped with a multitude of venues that are second to none, which should be used to showcase what Toronto has to offer.

Speaker, can the minister indicate what sorts of attractions are bringing tourists to Toronto and what exactly this government is doing to invest in the city's tourism so that it may continue to compete on an international level?

Hon. Michael Chan: Our efforts have firmly placed Toronto and Ontario on the world map as a premier global travel destination by offering one-of-a-kind festivals, cultural attractions, conventions and world-class sporting events that generate jobs and strengthen our economy.

Toronto has hosted a number of organizations and signature events. Last year, Speaker, our government was proud to welcome the International Indian Film Academy Awards to Toronto, drawing tens of thousands of visitors and enabling our economy to gain a greater share of India's $125-million overseas film production industry. This year, Speaker, the city welcomed the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada for their conference, which drew close to 30,000 people to the city. And this July, Toronto will host—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Deputy Premier. On March 1, the Minister of Health looked the members of this House in the eye and said, "If it is the will of this Legislature that a select committee be struck, I will be nothing but supportive."

Well, the Legislature has spoken. It is our will that a select committee be struck, yet the minister has been silent. Deputy Premier, where is the minister and why is she not supporting our call for a select committee?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is desperately close to making an assumption of someone's attendance here in the House. I understand what she said. I don't like the idea that it's walking the line. I would ask and remind the member not to do that again.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Once again, I know that the honourable member would never want to leave the impression that standing committees or the committees of this Legislature are not looking into the Ornge situation. As I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, on March 28, the public accounts committee, a standing committee of this Legislature, which in fact is chaired by one of her colleagues, will be looking into the Ornge situation.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In this case, I was actually trying to hear clearly and the member is sitting right beside me. I still couldn't hear, so please.

The answer?

Hon. John Milloy: On March 28, at 9 a.m., it will begin with a briefing by the Auditor General, followed by an appearance in the afternoon by the Deputy Minister of Health and the interim executive director of Ornge. Mr. Speaker, at the same time, the minister will be tabling legislation, introducing it in the House this afternoon, which, if it receives second reading, we anticipate will go to a parliamentary committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The will of the Legislature has been very clearly stated, and that is to have a select committee to look into this matter. The public accounts committee is not set up for that. They track progress in fixing the financial mismanagement the auditor identified. Similarly, the OPP is looking at evidence of criminal wrongdoing, not the focus that we need to have. And the legislation that the minister is proposing to bring in this afternoon is completely premature because we don't even know what the problem is. That is why we ask again, will you set up a select committee that has been identified and voted and supported by the will of this Legislature?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I thought the standing ovation was for me.

Let me review for members once again. We have had a forensic audit of Ornge. We have an OPP investigation into Ornge. We have the Auditor General's report, which will be made public very shortly. We have the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which has the full authority of any standing committee to call witnesses, to ask for papers. There was a committee meeting this morning which began to plan their hearings into Ornge. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, very shortly, the Minister of Health will be introducing legislation to this Legislature, which, if it passes second reading, I anticipate will go to committee, which will have an opportunity to examine the Ornge situation.

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I further add, Mr. Speaker, as my friend the deputy House leader keeps pointing out, there are nine standing committees of this Legislature, and under the standing orders of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Minister, on Monday, you stated in this House: "When we discuss programs, serious programs, which this government brought in, we do that in concert with our stakeholders. So we're having discussions with the agricultural sector. We'll sit down with our stakeholders ... to make sure that we get things right...."

Minister, the OLG revenue-sharing agreement was supported by your government for many years. In fact, in 2008, your government commissioned a study which found that the agreement was beneficial for the province. And, sir, the equine sector is a major agricultural stakeholder in the province. Minister, did you consult with the farm families that depend on the horse industry for their livelihood before your government decided to kill it?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: To the Minister of Finance and the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the Ontario—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not seeking quiet for you to continue.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. conducted public consultations beginning in January through to June 2011. They met with First Nations, they met with casino owners and operators, responsible gambling researchers, racetrack owners, horse people, industry leaders, operators in other jurisdictions, convenience store operators and government organizations. The consultations were conducted to hear stakeholder perceptions on the future of lottery and gaming in Ontario, to learn about best practices from within the province and around the world, and to identify opportunities to work with the private sector or stakeholders in new ways. The consistent message, Mr. Speaker, was that we had to change the way we're doing business, we had to be more effective and better at what we were doing, and we are—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Again to the Minister of Agriculture: The horse racing industry creates more than 30,000 direct jobs in the rural parts of Ontario: people who pay taxes, who in fact pay for health care and who create another 30,000 spinoff jobs—jobs that will disappear because your government decided to renege on a contract. The overall losses in the agricultural sector will be far greater than any money that your government will claim to save.

To the Minister of Agriculture: What do you have to say to the thousands of farm families who will lose their livelihood because of your government's decision?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think what needs to be put on the record is what we can do in rural Ontario with $345 million. For instance, Mr. Speaker, this sector receives two and a half times more than all the money made available to nine other sectors for risk management. With $345 million, we could hire 18 times more what is needed for meat inspection in rural Ontario; and we could cover all of rural Ontario with broadband. We are spending two times more on this than we spend on the rural economic development fund for all of rural Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, these are difficult choices. Our priority is to move in the direction we've indicated. The NDP are trying to have it both ways. They oppose gambling one day, and the next—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

QUEEN ELIZABETH II DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDAL

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, this is a landmark year in Canada: 2012 marks the 60th anniversary of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's ascension to the throne. It is the year of her Diamond Jubilee. This is an incredible landmark, Mr. Speaker.

This year-long celebration gives Ontarians a chance to look back and thank Her Majesty for her tireless service to Ontario and to Canada. It also gives all of us in this House the opportunity to recognize outstanding community leaders who exemplify the Queen's kindness, generosity and sense of duty.

Minister, you've mentioned in this House before that the Diamond Jubilee Medals will be awarded to a number of deserving Ontarians. My question to the minister is: How will this medal serve to recognize those deserving individuals in our communities?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd like to thank the great member from Ajax–Pickering for the question.

This year marks the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen. The last monarch to celebrate a Diamond Jubilee was Queen Victoria, in 1897. To recognize this milestone, the province will recognize over 2,000 outstanding Ontarians with a Diamond Jubilee Medal, and these medal recipients are people who have used their time and talents to make our province a better place to live. Residents of Ontario can be nominated if they are a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident and have distinguished themselves in their fields.

Mr. Speaker, this is a fitting way to celebrate Her Majesty and the importance she puts on service to others.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Minister, I know that there is a lot of excitement out there about these awards. People are asking how they can nominate worthy community members from their own community. In my community of Ajax–Pickering alone, there are a number of individuals whose commitment and service have been extraordinary, and these will be announced very shortly.

Minister, how can members of this House and all Ontarians nominate deserving members of our communities for a Diamond Jubilee Medal?

Hon. Charles Sousa: This is an exciting opportunity to recognize some truly outstanding individuals. All members of provincial Parliament have the opportunity to nominate residents of their ridings to receive Diamond Jubilee Medals. This will ensure that they reach every corner of the province and reward those Ontarians who share the bravery, kindness and commitment demonstrated by the Queen.

In addition, all Ontarians have a chance to nominate members of their community for a Diamond Jubilee Medal. Ontarians can visit the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration's website and fill out the online nomination form.

Throughout her reign, Her Majesty has been an inspiration to people around the world. Let us recognize extraordinary Ontarians in honour of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Education. Minister, last week you defended the fact that your government broke a revenue-sharing agreement by saying that the agreement only benefits "a few wealthy racetrack owners." Minister, obviously you have heard from Ontarians who are incensed by your absolutely disgraceful comments. Do you still agree that the revenue-sharing agreement that you have broken only benefits a few wealthy racetrack owners?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: To the Minister of Finance.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to take the question, for which I have responsibility—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, last and only warning.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've been talking today a lot about Ornge, Mr. Speaker. This year we'll spend $150 million on Ornge. That compares to $345 million to the horse racing industry.

These are difficult and necessary choices. With the $345 million we can continue to hire nurses in our small rural hospitals who will contribute to the economy. We can keep teachers in small rural schools. That is our priority: more teachers in rural schools and more nurses in rural hospitals.

1130

These times call for difficult and necessary choices. We've made one here. It's the appropriate thing under the circumstances. Our priorities are—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I can tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker: The horse racing industry is not Ornge.

Minister, today in the members' gallery we have Ms. Rosie Shellswell. Rosie is not a wealthy racetrack owner. Rosie is 31 years old. She has cared for horses and has prepared them for racing for the past 16 years. This is her livelihood. Rosie cannot drive because she has an inoperable brain tumour. She can only dream of having an income and a chauffeur and all the benefits similar to those you, as the minister, have. Yet Rosie continues to smile and care for her horses and has never received one penny of compensation from the taxpayers of Ontario.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Or your leader. Your leader has one. Your leader has a chauffeur.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Why don't you shut up, okay?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Be seated, please.

The member will withdraw.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I withdraw that, sir.

Rosie is one of 60,000-plus people who will not be able to earn a living as a result of your sad and pathetic destruction of the horse racing industry, an industry that has returned some $16 billion to this province. Minister, can you explain to Rosie what prompted you to kill 60,000 Ontario jobs, and do you have the courage to actually apologize to Rosie and others like her in this province for your comments?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There are people who are losing their jobs. These are difficult and necessary choices, but we have a $16-billion deficit. The member opposite feigns deep concern but waits till the last minute of question period to ask questions. Two weeks ago, they said we should end all corporate subsidies. Just be careful, I would say to the industry, to work with all sides of the House, because they say one thing one day and quite a different thing the other day. We differ with them; these are difficult transitions.

There will be a horse racing industry. It will be comparable in size to others. Unfortunately, these difficult and necessary choices are being made in the best interests of all Ontarians.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This question is to the Acting Premier. We have learned today that the dozens of hospital projects that the Liberal government had promised during the election campaign, just a few short months ago, are on the chopping block. In my community, we have been waiting for years for a new facility at Peel Memorial Hospital. Promise after promise has been made and broken. In October 2007, the McGuinty government announced funding for this hospital. Four years later, again on the eve of an election, this funding was reannounced. Can the Acting Premier assure my community that the Peel Memorial Hospital redevelopment will actually move forward?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Infrastructure.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, we're proud of the 23 hospitals that were built or under construction under our government, certainly compared to the 28 hospitals that were closed by the Conservative government. We have been making unprecedented investments in infrastructure over the last seven years. Indeed, the average infrastructure investment by the previous government was $2.6 billion per year. Our average, over the last seven years, has been over $10 billion per year.

The article that appeared in the newspaper today is inaccurate in many respects. I would encourage the member to pay attention to the budget. The reality is that there will be some adjustments made in our profiling of infrastructure, but we will still have a very robust infrastructure budget creating many jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

I offer to the members an observation, and the observation is one of my difficulty in hearing, sometimes, the question, and, most of the times, the answer. Sometimes people point their fingers at each other, saying they said something unparliamentary. I cannot hear everything that is said and done. This is about the honour of members not using unparliamentary language. If any member uses unparliamentary language, I will accept a point of order to withdraw on their own. I will accept the reality of the heatedness of some of the topics. What I'm asking all members to do is to co-operate with each other as much as I'm asking them to co-operate with me.

SPECIAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a special report of the Auditor General on Ornge Air Ambulance and Related Services.

Copies of this report will be deposited in every member's mail slot downstairs in the mailroom, and additional copies will be available in each of the lobbies as you leave the chamber presently.

There are no outstanding votes. I will now recess this House until—

Mr. Rob Leone: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry. The member for Cambridge on a point of order.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I understand the problems that you're having keeping order in this Legislature. I want to draw your attention to standing order 23, sections (h), (i), (j) and (k), with respect to some of the comments we heard in answers to questions, particularly with reference to the fact that the Minister of Finance—or the Acting Premier or the Deputy Premier or whatever his title is today; maybe it's the agriculture minister or the health minister or anything like that. He stated, in

defence of the Minister of Health, that the Minister of Health was better than anything on this side of the House. I say that with particular reference to the member for Oxford, the member for Simcoe–Grey, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo and the member for Oshawa, who are members of a great cabinet, the PC cabinet of this caucus, who knew the value of ministerial responsibility and who are asking legitimately for the Minister of Health to resign.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't find it to be a point of order, and I also probably find it to be a point of opinion.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I have three guests here today from various organizations, and I expect they'll probably come in to watch a bit of the discussion this afternoon, especially given the health care debate: Kim Gavine from the Oak Ridges Moraine Foundation, a wonderful person; Allan O'Dette from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce; and Puneet Luthra, who's the director of government relations for CGA Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park and the information that will be shared this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're glad they're here.

The member from Pickering-Ajax. I got it wrong. Richmond Hill.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct pleasure and honour to introduce and welcome my good friend Professor Abdolreza Abhari from the Ryerson University computer sciences department. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, and welcome. I apologize to the member. I was looking at the entrance of the member from Pickering-Ajax; hence my mistake. So I apologize.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DIETITIANS DAY

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Today marks the third anniversary of Dietitians Day. March has been designated as Nutrition Month by the Dietitians of Canada, and Dietitians Day celebrates the professionals who provide the expertise on food and nutrition. This year, the dietitians are using the month of March to debunk myths around food and nutrition through their campaign "Get the Real Deal on your Meal."

As a supporter of this campaign, I want to highlight the tremendous work of dietitians, who are indispensable health care professionals in Ontario. Using high-quality, evidence-based, patient-centred nutritional assessments, dietitians help our children, our families and, of course, our communities lead healthier lives.

Dietitians apply their scientific and medical expertise to nutritional plans that cater to our individual needs. With the increasing concern on what we consume, dietitians are becoming increasingly more important in a wide range of sectors, including our schools, our nursing homes, our hospitals and in our sports activities. They are members of a provincial regulatory body, which ensures the credibility of their practice and protects the public at large.

Dietitians' ubiquity shows the importance of celebrating Dietitians Day. Once again, thank you to all the dietitians in Ontario.

PENSION PLANS

Miss Monique Taylor: Today, I would like to highlight the situation faced by Ontario retirees and, in particular, those in my riding of Hamilton Mountain.

The workers at US Steel, formerly Stelco, went through a lengthy lockout as they fought to keep the pension benefits that they had been paying for and that they had been planning their retirement around. The end result for Stelco workers was that the defined benefit plan would no longer be available to new hires and that current retirees would lose the indexing of their pensions.

As is often the case in Steeltown, ArcelorMittal Dofasco has followed the same path, and they, too, will be closing the plan to new hires and imposing other reductions in benefits of retirees.

This attack on pensions is a disturbing trend and is a huge concern for retirees, for those thinking ahead to their own retirement and for their families.

Defined contribution plans are unpredictable. Over the long term, a significant move in this direction would be absolutely disastrous for retirees. Additionally, there's a lot of concern with the direction being taken by the federal government to increase the qualification for old age security.

There are many issues on this, Mr. Speaker, all of which I obviously can't get to today, but thank you very much for your time.

DIETITIANS DAY

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise in the House today to recognize that this month is Dietitians of Canada Nutrition Month, and today, March 21, is Dietitians Day.

Every year in March, dietitians across the country remind us of the importance of healthy eating and the positive impact nutrition has on our health and well-being. This year, dietitians are dedicated to busting up popular food and nutrition myths by bringing truths to Canadians.

It's important for Ontarians to know that dietitians are uniquely trained to translate the science of nutrition into healthy food choices, and they work throughout the system, in health promotion and health care, food com-

panies and with our schools. Dietitians also base their advice on best available evidence, and conduct research to further knowledge of food and nutrition.

Speaker, dietitians work with EatRight Ontario, where Ontarians can access free advice from a dietitian through a toll-free number, via email or through their website.

Our most heartfelt thanks to all dietitians in Ontario for all their hard work.

CO-OPERATIVES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today on behalf of my leader, Tim Hudak, and the entire PC caucus to recognize the International Year of Co-operatives. This year is an opportunity to raise public awareness of co-operatives and their social and economic contributions to society. It's also an opportunity to begin legacy initiatives that will outlive the international year and inspire others to support the co-operative movement.

The existence of co-operatives across all sectors of the economy speaks to the influence and relevance of the co-operative movement. Ontario alone has more than 1,300 co-ops, with 1.4 million members. I'm proud to say that four of these co-operatives are located in my home village of Teeswater.

I am a champion of the co-operative movement, not only for the social and economic benefits they have, but because I learned first-hand about the role of co-operatives. Before October 6, 2011, I was general manager of a multi-million dollar initiative known as the Ontario Dairy Goat Co-operative, based in Teeswater. The Ontario Dairy Goat Co-operative was established in 2002—I hope Mr. Leal appreciates this—and this dairy goat co-operative allows members to be actively involved in the marketing of their own milk and to be fully aware of what is happening in their marketplace, their business and with their money.

I'm also pleased to recognize Gay Lea Foods, Huron Bay and our local grocery store, the River Village market, which is owned by members of our community. They are also co-operatives, with ODGC, again in my home village of Teeswater.

I want to thank On Co-Op, the Ontario Co-operative Association, for hosting the MPPs at their Queen's Park reception last night.

GEORGE FREUNDLICH

Mr. John Vanthof: It's both an honour and a pleasure to have this time today to talk about a northern icon and pillar of the community in the municipality of Black River-Matheson.

Dr. George Freundlich was born in Romania, travelled the world, worked in Newfoundland and then decided to take up residence as a general practitioner in northern Ontario. No one calls him Dr. Freundlich. To Matheson and beyond, he is Dr. George. Nineteen years ago, he came to Black River-Matheson to start his practice, and the residents of the area have been receiving the benefits of his life's work ever since.

As a doctor, Dr. George is dedicated to providing excellent health care for both the residents of the area and to Matheson's Bingham Memorial Hospital, a health care facility located in the great riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane. As we speak, he is holding the fort, working 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to keep the emergency room open as the community looks for a second doctor to join the health team.

This is not the first time he has accomplished this feat. A few years ago, he did a six-week stint where he was the sole health care provider for the whole area, and again, he managed to keep the ER operating during that stressful time.

As a thank-you to Dr. George, the municipality of Matheson has organized an evening of appreciation in his honour. On Saturday evening, March 24, 2012, the community will gather to say thank you to the man who has made health care a stable entity in their town.

To Dr. George, I say thank you for your endless support to health care in Matheson and beyond.

1510

OTTAWA ST. PATRICK'S PARADE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to talk about the 30th annual St. Patrick's Day parade that took place in Ottawa this year and takes place every year in my community in Ottawa Centre. This parade has been going on since 1982, and it's the largest parade of any kind in the city of Ottawa.

St. Patrick's Day is obviously a special day for all of us, whether we are Irish or not. For that special day, I think we are all Irish. And it's the Irish Society of the National Capital Region which has been successfully hosting the St. Patrick's Day parade in Ottawa, in my riding of Ottawa Centre, for the last 30 years.

The society, of course, hosts an exciting Ottawa Irish Festival for the whole week, for all members of our community. This week-long event, Speaker, allows residents and visitors to enjoy the very best of all things Irish—music, poetry, history, song, dance, theatre, language, sport and, of course, the annual Ottawa St. Patrick's Day parade and the grand Irish party that takes place at Lansdowne Park in the great riding of Ottawa Centre.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Sean Kealey, who is the parade manager, and also the board of the Irish society: Tracey Dixon, Laura Hay, Scott Bell, Denise Trottier, Bryan Daly, Peter Rock, Margo Connolly, Micheline Patrice and Helena McSheffrey Beattie for their great community work and organizing. And thank you to them for always choosing Ottawa Food Bank as the official charity and for the people of Ottawa for coming out to the great parade.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. John O'Toole: This is a very serious topic. With the Premier's dismal fiscal record, I find it ironic that the government continues to tell persons with defined contribution pension funds what they can do with their money. Ontarians with RRSPs have full control over their registered funds; Ontarians who have locked-in pensions do not. The money in these locked-in accounts cannot be fully accessed without permission from Premier McGuinty. Those facing financial hardships have to file an application with FSCO, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, to get their own money.

Until 2009, the cost of these applications alone was between $200 and $900. Over much of the past decade, FSCO has spent almost $30 million to administer this program, but has rejected virtually none of the applications. In 2009, for example, only two applications were rejected. In 2008, none were rejected. Yet they're spending $30 million administering this committee. Does the Minister of Finance even know the province is wasting $30 million each year in a rubber-stamp process that allows Ontarians to access their own money? This is an example of government waste and duplication and red tape.

I want to recognize the Ontario Coalition of Independent LIF Holders and Bill Nafziger for his advocacy on this issue. Thank you, Bill.

The solution is simple: End the red tape, give the citizens the right to their own money, not just half of it, the way they should with RRSPs. In this process, this government could save millions of dollars and help people that need relief.

PROGRAMME RÊVE ET RÉALITÉ

M. Phil McNeely: La ville de Toronto sera l'hôte, en 2015, des Jeux pan/parapanaméricains. Dans le cadre de cet événement sportif, le comité organisateur a introduit le programme Rêve et réalité. C'est un projet pilote fascinant et unique de Toronto 2015 qui rassemble des athlètes de haute performance et des élèves de neuvième et 10^{e} années. Le but est d'inciter les jeunes athlètes à se fixer des objectifs atteignables, à s'engager au sein de leur communauté et à adopter un style de vie sain et actif.

Plus de 20 écoles dans le sud de l'Ontario pour l'année scolaire 2011-2012 y participent. On jumèle les écoles participantes à un athlète d'élite de leur communauté qui leur rendra visite deux fois par année, dans le but de faire part de ses expériences de vie et de ses expériences sportives à titre d'athlète de compétition sur la scène nationale et internationale. En plus de rendre visite à l'école, chaque athlète demeurera en contact avec son école par l'entremise des médias sociaux.

C'est donc avec fierté que j'ai appris que l'École secondaire publique Louis-Riel, située dans ma circonscription électorale d'Ottawa–Orléans, a été choisie pour faire partie de ce projet pilote. Alors, félicitations à l'école Louis-Riel pour sa sélection et bonne chance aux élèves participants.

HEADWATERS HEALTH CARE CENTRE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Headwaters Health Care Centre on celebrating 100 years of outstanding health care service for the residents of our community.

The original idea for a local hospital began with the Lord Dufferin Chapter of the International Daughters of the Empire after a train accident in 1907, when necessary medical and life-saving measures were not readily available. The IODE began raising funds shortly after that tragedy, and by 1911 had raised the $2,300 needed to purchase the Kearns house on First Street in Orangeville.

When the doors of the Lord Dufferin Hospital officially opened in 1912, there were enough beds for eight patients. A school of nursing was also operating there until 1933.

Over the last century, as the town and surrounding communities have grown, so, too, has the hospital. The exceptional philanthropy and community spirit that inspired the women of the IODE has continued for 100 years. In 1997, our community, from elementary school children to seniors, worked together to raise funds so that we could build a new hospital. The community has also generously supported over the years the latest diagnostic equipment or specialized services, such as cancer care and dialysis, so health care can be provided close to home.

A commitment to compassionate care is the hallmark of Headwaters. Over the years, countless volunteer board members, physicians, nurses, allied health professionals and our auxiliary volunteers have worked to make Headwaters a community hospital in so much more than name.

Congratulations to Headwaters Health Care Centre on your 100th anniversary.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, pursuant to standing order 111(b).

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Dunlop presents a committee report. Does the member have a brief statement?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: No, I don't, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Pursuant to standing order number 111(b), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister for a statement.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I will do that during ministerial statements.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (BRAKE PAD STANDARDS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (NORMES RELATIVES AUX PLAQUETTES DE FREIN)

Mrs. Sandals moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 51, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to brake pad standards and specifications / Projet de loi 51, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui a trait aux normes et aux caractéristiques relatives aux plaquettes de frein.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

1520

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Yes, thank you, Speaker. The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act to require that motor vehicles, other than motorcycles, that are equipped with brake pads be equipped with brake pads that meet the prescribed standards and specifications and that do not contain asbestos.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I rise in the House today to introduce legislation to amend the Ambulance Act. I'm taking action on the Auditor General's recommendations to strengthen accountability, oversight and transparency at Ontario's air ambulance and critical-care land ambulance service, Ornge.

I have met with many of the dedicated front-line paramedics, pilots and staff at Ornge, and I can tell you that they are fully committed to providing the best possible care to Ontario patients.

As the auditor notes, we have already taken substantive action to address many of the issues in this report, starting with the appointment of an interim president and CEO and a new board of directors. I want to thank the new leadership at Ornge, who have already made tremendous progress in their core mission of providing life-saving care to Ontario patients. They have my full confidence. Ornge is now on the right path forward, but there were serious problems under the former leadership.

Speaker, I took action when I learned that the Auditor General was being stonewalled by Ornge. When I learned about the outrageous compensation being paid to their president and CEO, I launched a forensic audit and recommended that new leadership be put in place. When the forensic auditors found serious financial irregularities, my ministry officials referred the matter to the OPP, and their criminal investigation is currently under way.

As minister, I take my full share of responsibility for what has transpired. It is important that we all learn lessons from this situation. I deeply regret what has happened, and I am fully committed to fixing the problems so that they will never happen again.

Speaker, these proposed amendments to the Ambulance Act will strengthen oversight and prevent future abuses of power at Ontario's air ambulance service. It is vitally important that employees do not feel intimidated when raising their concerns. That's why our proposed legislation will protect whistle-blowers at Ornge who disclose information to an inspector, an investigator or the government. These amendments will allow the government to take control of Ornge in extraordinary circumstances through the appointment of a supervisor, just like we can with our hospitals. These changes will also allow us to appoint special investigators where it is in the public interest to do so, and to appoint members to Ornge's board of directors.

In the past, if we needed to make changes to the government's performance agreement with Ornge, we could do so only with Ornge's agreement. That was simply not feasible when immediate changes needed to be made. That's why the proposed legislation will allow the government to change the performance agreement with Ornge at any time.

Speaker, if we had had these legislative powers—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I want to remind the members—all members—that in this particular case, when ministers' statements are being made, there is an opportunity to respond. When the bill is introduced, which it has been, there will be many more other opportunities for all members to speak. I would appreciate very much the avoidance of heckling during a

minister's statement, as will be my expectation of the government's side not to heckle the response.

Minister, proceed.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If we had had these legislative powers, they would have gone a long way towards keeping those in charge at Ornge in check.

In addition to this legislation, we now have an amended performance agreement with Ornge in place. The original performance agreement simply did not provide the accountability, oversight and transparency needed by the government. The amended performance agreement will safeguard patient care and provide better value for taxpayer dollars.

Speaker, I am steadfastly committed to continuing our progress at Ornge, and I'm confident that the steps we have taken today will provide the oversight needed to ensure a bright future for Ontario's air ambulance service.

Again, I want to thank the paramedics, the pilots, the front-line staff at Ornge who, from the beginning, have put patients first. We know there is much more to do, but we have taken swift action and will continue to work hard to ensure the best possible care for the people of Ontario.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. It marks the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa on March 21, 1960. That's when police opened fire on a peaceful crowd demonstrating against laws designed to segregate the population and severely limit the movement of people who were not white. Tragically, 69 people lost their lives.

This appalling event led the United Nations General Assembly to proclaim March 21 of every year the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. On this day, nations are called on to redouble their efforts to end all forms of racial discrimination.

Much has changed since the Sharpeville shootings. Apartheid has ended, the United States has passed civil rights legislation, and in Canada, in 1962, Ontario's Human Rights Code came into force. The code banned racial discrimination, as well as other forms of discrimination. This legal framework underpins a thriving and diverse society of which we are all so proud.

Over the past half century, the face of Ontario has changed dramatically. Newcomers come from everywhere, all over the world. In Ontario, more than 20% of us are from visible minorities, and in the greater Toronto area it is more than 40% of the population. Ontario succeeds because we have a shared commitment to work together and build together as a people, united and equal. We do things in what the Premier calls the Ontario way. Ontario is a place where we celebrate our differences. We know it's right to respect each other, support each other and lift each other up. We recognize our diversity as a strength.

We also know diversity requires continuing work. We will not rest until we have removed every taint of racism in our midst. Whether a taunt in a schoolyard, vandalism at a place of worship, unfairness in the workplace or restrictive access to service, Ontarians have zero tolerance for racial discrimination. Racism hurts us all. It betrays our shared ideals. And we all lose when some of us are excluded from participating fully in society.

We are fortunate to have dedicated community groups around the province striving to take down barriers that divide us. On this international day, I salute their tireless efforts to make diversity work.

I also remind the House that fighting racial discrimination is everyone's business. We all have the power to change hearts and minds. Together, let us create an Ontario free of racism, an inclusive Ontario where everyone lives with dignity and mutual respect, and where everyone contributes to building a brighter and more prosperous future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries?

It is now time for responses, and I do remind the government that I've asked for respectful listening to the responses to the ministers' statements.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today is a black day for the people in the province of Ontario as they are faced with yet another scandal, a scandal where we see that there has been a total mismanagement of public finances and also a total lack of concern and oversight to an agency called Ornge. It's a black day because the minister now, in an attempt to whitewash all that has happened, is introducing what she says is an agreement that will correct the sins of the past that have been committed by this government.

When we listen today to the Attorney General in his report—

Interjection.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The Auditor General; I apologize. He highlights it by saying, "They failed to provide the oversight," and yet this minister has continued to stand in her place and to tell us that she wasn't able to do so. We hear from him that that wasn't the case. We hear about numerous red flags that were raised by him and by others, but we also hear that this government, this minister, this Premier, never took the concerns seriously. They never investigated them. They never questioned the practices at Ornge and those who came in front of them. They totally discounted the fact that public money was being wasted, and they also didn't take into consideration the safety of patients.

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The Minister of Health in the province of Ontario is responsible and accountable for the safe and timely

transport of patients. We have learned, as we take a look at what happened at Ornge, that there are tremendous concerns that have been raised about the quality of patient care that has been provided. I think the minister has much for which she should answer.

We also know that the minister was given a draft report in September of last year. At that time, again, she was told by the Auditor General that there were lots of red flags and that they needed to be asking more questions, but they refused to do so. In fact, there were red flags raised in his 2011 letter. It was suggested at that time that they should be asking more questions of the Ornge executives who were setting up those new companies.

But we got the impression each time that this government was trying to cover up what was going on at Ornge, because they had never lived up to the commitment that they made when Ornge was established. That was to provide standards and to make sure that they monitored the performance standards and that they would provide the oversight that was required to ensure fiscal and patient accountability.

So we have today an agreement which is totally meaningless. This minister has always been in a position, as has this government now, since 2006, to monitor and to provide the oversight to Ornge that was necessary.

Mr. John O'Toole: They did nothing.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: They did absolutely nothing. Red flags have been raised now for several years, several months, and it's an embarrassment for the minister to stand up today and to say that anything is going to change.

In fact, it is embarrassing to listen to the minister today blame the people at Ornge. She is accountable. As a minister in cabinet, you are responsible for what goes on at your ministry. When we were in government, we stepped down. We resigned. Well, ultimately, she is responsible for the scandal at Ornge, as this government was for the scandal at eHealth, and the only appropriate thing to do today, because the oversight at Ornge was totally inadequate, is for the minister to step down and resign.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Response?

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you so much to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

The Sharpeville Massacre shocked the world, and it led the United Nations to create the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Apartheid was discarded in 1994. Racism is not dismantled quite so easily.

Racism doesn't require razor wire—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, member. Responses?

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Michael Prue: In response to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, we are here to salute the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This year's theme is to end racism and conflict everywhere.

We know throughout the history of humankind, particularly in the last century, that there have been many racial conflicts, many people murdered and killed—anything from the Hutus and the Tutsis in Rwanda, World War II, the atrocities that took place in the former Yugoslavia, what happened at the beginning of the century to the Armenians and the Pontians.

We look, even today, at what is happening around the world. We look to France in the last couple of days, where innocent Jewish children were murdered in the street, where people who are soldiers who are believed to be followers of Islam are murdered in the streets of France, and you have a country there that is in absolute turmoil. Then we say to ourselves, "Thank goodness this does not happen in Canada. Thank goodness, in this country, we recognize and support people of all faiths and religions."

I would like to think that that was true and, in fact, I believe for the overwhelming majority—99.9% of the people—that's true. But I want to read—I got the most disturbing, disturbing email the other day that I want to share with you, because these attitudes are still out here in our city and in our country.

I had an opportunity to make a comment to the Toronto Sun and to talk about how immigration procedures could be improved in Ontario to help more people immigrate to this great province. This is the response I got, in part: "Perhaps one day your limo driver could drive you out to the wilds of Scarborough and you can take a first-hand look at what immigration had done to Toronto and the surrounding areas.

"You actually think that we need more Chinese in Scarborough? We have to move from our house we have lived" in "for 30 years because our area has been overrun with Chinese who have been allowed to ruin everything in their path."

It goes on to talk about people being garbage. It goes on to talk about the horrible smells that they bring to the streets. This is the kind of stuff that's still out there.

So I am here today to say that we cannot hide any longer. We cannot just stand up here on platitudes. We have to expose people with statements like this, with the idiocy that's in their minds. I'm not even going to tell the Legislature this man's name, but this is what's happening.

This is the day for the elimination of racial discrimination. We will be celebrating the J.S. Woodsworth Awards tonight across the street, over in the Macdonald Block. We invite everyone to come. We want to show that we support people in their efforts to make this a great country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Member's response?

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^me^ France Gélinas: Well, today was a rather distressing day for the NDP caucus. We had the report from the Auditor General that basically told us that when Ornge was established, the ministry promised management board and the public accounts committee that they were "committed to establishing performance standards and monitoring the performance of" external service providers. They never did put that accountability agreement in place. They never did put those standards in place.

But the auditor goes on to say, "...the performance agreement did contain a number of administrative and reporting requirements that Ornge" had to comply with, but through those seven years that Ornge has been there, those levers were never used.

We now have a minister that's telling us we need better levers to be able to control Ornge. That ship has sailed, Mr. Speaker. They had levers in place. They had—and I will quote: "The agreement also states that the ministry can terminate the agreement if Ornge does not comply...." They had levers at their disposal; they never used them. They had knowledge, red flags that went up. Months passed. Nothing was done.

Today in the press conference, the minister said, after the January 11 letter was published that assured them, in writing and orally, that there was no public money being used for for-profit—she said alarm bells were rung, and "we continue to do the work." But then the Auditor General tabled his interim report in September, and he had to convince the government and the minister that something was wrong at Ornge.

The story doesn't jibe, Mr. Speaker. The minister cannot go out and say, "And we were trying to move," but then the auditor comes and asks them to move and they say, "No, no. We don't think there's anything wrong." The only thing left to do is to resign.

PETITIONS

WASTE DISPOSAL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for petitions. The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Are you going to ask for a resignation as well, there, Grant?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Speaker—and no.

It gives me great pleasure to rise today on behalf of citizens in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the undersigned residents in the constituency of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell in the province of Ontario, draw to the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario the following:

"Whereas the petitioners have serious grievances with the proposed development by Taggart Miller Environmental Services, proponents of the Capital Region Resource Recovery Centre planned for the old Russell shale pit and surrounding properties between Eadie Road and North Russell Road, between routes 100 and 200 in the township of Russell;

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario ... to take action to cause an absolute cease and desist order for this proposed CRRRC development by Taggart Miller Environmental Services on this site of the old Russell shale pit and surrounding properties in the township of Russell in the province of Ontario."

Interjections.

Mr. Grant Crack: I would like to affix my signature to this and give it to my friend, page Alexander.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will make a quick—I can't believe I'm going to ask people not to heckle during petitions.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The record-breaking member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Speaker, I'll break another record here. I have a little preamble here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the greenbelt; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility," in fact, "a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and provincially sensitive wetlands; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier governments to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Minister of the Environment to initiate" immediately "a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent contamination of the greenbelt, specifically at" locations in my riding of Durham.

I am pleased to sign and support this and present it to Teresa, one of the new pages.

INSURANCE RATES

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition in front of me that was given to me last week. It's regarding

insurance premiums and was prepared by Effie Hadzis, one of my constituents, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the residents of Scarborough have been experiencing drastic increases in their insurance premiums year over year because of the area they happen to live in. The rate increases have been so extreme, whereby within one year, insurance premiums have increased by more than 25%, regardless of the residents having an excellent record or standing with no claims to date. Rate increases have occurred up to four times per year;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We disagree with the significant multiple increases in our insurance rates each year mainly due to the area we live in Scarborough. The Ontario government needs to implement a law to regulate the drastic increases in insurance premiums which insurance companies make each year, especially for the residents of Scarborough who have an excellent record or standing with no claims to date; thus standardizing the rates fairly."

I present this petition to the House today. I sign it because I agree with it, and give it to page Nicholas.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition signed by a great number of people in my riding, concerning the future of 80 long-term-care beds in the village of Tavistock. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Tavistock's Bonnie Brae Health Care Centre is an 80-bed, D-class nursing home that must be either rebuilt or closed by July 2014; and

"Whereas there is currently an application by a private operator to move the 80 licensed beds outside of Oxford county to the city of London, despite the recent opening of two other long-term-care homes in Middlesex county in 2010; and

"Whereas long-term-care wait times in Oxford county can be as much as 134 days longer than in Middlesex county; and

"Whereas Tavistock receives referrals from the nearby Waterloo Wellington CCAC, which has among the highest waits for long-term care in the province;

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario retain these beds in Tavistock and seek partners to fast-track replacement of the Bonnie Brae as part of Ontario's 10-year plan to modernize 35,000 long-term-care beds."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me this opportunity. I affix my signature, as I agree with this petition.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: On behalf of literally thousands of people from my riding of Huron–Bruce, I'd like to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the closure of the Bluewater Youth Centre will have a negative economic impact on Goderich and the surrounding area; and

"Whereas there is a need to deal with overcrowding in the Ontario correctional system; and

"Whereas the federal Bill C-10, Safe Streets and Communities Act, will increase the population in the Ontario correctional system over the next four years; and

"Whereas the Bluewater Youth Centre would need very little retrofitting and the staff would need minimal retraining to open as a medium-secure correctional facility which could hold more than 200 beds required by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services; and

"Whereas specialized treatment programs within the correctional system such as drug treatment, mental health issues, could be offered with the skilled support staff currently in place; and

"Whereas we believe that this is the most economical way to add an additional 200 beds to the Ontario correctional system, as the building is in place and staff are currently hired to run such a facility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government engage in meaningful community and employee consultation in order to find alternate uses within the youth services or correctional services system for this facility, thereby preventing job losses and economic hardship for an area already badly impacted by plant closures and tornado damage."

I agree with this petition, and I affix my signature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

The member from the Nickel Belt.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^me^ France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always nice to see you in the chair.

I have this petition from the people of the northeast, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making" PET scanning "a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario," with Health Sciences North, "its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through" Health Sciences North, "thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens" of the northeast.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Felix to bring it to the Clerk.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition from a group of residents of my riding of York South–Weston addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas St. John the Evangelist Catholic elementary school in Weston is overcrowded, with 480 students in a school designed for 260; and

"Whereas the students will be relocating 40 minutes away in September 2012 during the duration of the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; and

"Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board has placed St. John the Evangelist third on the urgent capital priority list for 2012;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Respectfully request full funding to replace St. John the Evangelist school during the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; therefore, the students are not relocated twice."

I agree with this petition; I will affix my signature and hand it over to page Teresa.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Robert Bailey: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government has announced that the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. will end its Hiawatha racetrack slots operations in Sarnia on March 31, 2013; and

"Whereas the end of this program will cost the city of Sarnia 140 jobs immediately and $1.5 million a year in gaming revenues, not to mention potentially 60,000 jobs across the province if the program is scrapped entirely; and

"Whereas there has been absolutely no consultation with the community, employees, or owner/operator of the local facility; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government continues to put more and more Ontarians out of work due to its ill-conceived, ad hoc decisions, including, in Sarnia, the loss of 80 jobs at the local jail, 100 jobs at Lambton generating station, and numerous others due to high energy costs on businesses;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the McGuinty government stop risking thousands of jobs in Ontario and $1.5 billion in potential revenue by mismanaging the racetrack slots program and focus on finding solutions to the real problems that Ontario is facing."

I agree with this, and I affix my signature and send it down with Liam.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Mantha: This is a petition on behalf of the members I represent in Algoma–Manitoulin.

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have been paying over millions in extra charges on their hydro bills to help retire the debt. The amount collected to date as per the Auditor General's report is $8.7 billion, but the amount owing was $7.8 billion;

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"Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking, where is the money being invested?

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking why this was not addressed at the time" of the debt being paid;

"Whereas electrical rates have increased with the new creation of green energy coming online to include solar and wind, refurbishment of nuclear plants and deregulation of Hydro One;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows to obtain answers to the following" two "questions:

"How much of the debt remains?

"When will it be eliminated from Ontario taxpayers' hydro bills?"

I agree with this petition, and I will be presenting it to Felix, this wonderful, strapping young gentleman.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the people of Ontario with respect to the decision to close Blyth Public School by the Avon Maitland District School Board.

"Whereas the pupil accommodation review states that an ARC committee is required, among other things, to determine the value of a school to the local economy, yet in the case of the Blyth Public School, there is in the minutes of the ARC committee not a single reference to any discussion of the effects of school closure on the local economy; and

"Whereas the same guideline states that the ARC, which is appointed by the board, must include membership drawn from the school community and the broader community, including, among others, business and municipal leaders, yet the ARC meetings considering the Blyth Public School included no Blyth business or municipal leaders; and

"Whereas the only invitations to public meetings in Blyth regarding the accommodation review were taken home by students to their parents, with the result that the broader community were not represented in the discussions; and

"Whereas many other communities across Ontario are now encountering very similar behaviours by their school boards; and

"Whereas single-school communities across Ontario are being permanently damaged economically and socially by the closure of their only school, which is, according to Premier McGuinty, the heart and soul of these communities; and

"Whereas the current Education Act of Ontario very undemocratically provides school boards with the abso-

lute power to close any school they choose, with no avenue of appeal available to anyone, not even members of their own communities;

"Therefore we, the residents of Ontario who have signed our names below, do hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to adopt and enact the following measures:

"(1) An immediate moratorium on all disputed school closures resulting from the accommodation review process and continuing until June 30, 2015; and

"(2) The immediate striking of a truly independent third party body with the authority to review and reverse all disputed school closures found to be detrimental to the community or in conflict with other provincial programs or regulations; and

"(3) Revision of the Education Act to require school boards to work with their municipalities and communities to ensure school closures comply with the principles and practices of sound community and educational planning."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition and I sign it and I'll give it to Emily to present to the table.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to have a petition from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows—in fact, there's a very interesting meeting in my riding in Blackstock tonight on this very issue.

"Whereas Cartwright High School is an important part of the Blackstock and area community; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools help to keep communities strong'"—I kind of go along with that.

"Whereas schools in rural areas are community places; and

"Whereas Cartwright students, families, friends and staff have created an effective learning" environment and experience and atmosphere in the community for "individual attention and full participation by students in school activities; and

"Whereas the framework of rural schools is different from urban schools and therefore deserves" a governance model of a "rural school policy; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government found $12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep rural schools open in communities such as Blackstock;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition"—assertively—"the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education"—who's here today—"support the Cartwright High School community and suspend plans to close Cartwright High School under the school board's accommodation review process until the province develops a rural school policy that respects the value of smaller schools in rural communities of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign it and support it and present it to page Nicholas, because I'm sure he would support this petition as well.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPLY ACT, 2012
LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2012

Mr. Milloy, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012 / Projet de loi 46, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2012.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Milloy has moved G46, second reading. Mr. Milloy.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to just speak briefly about Bill 46, which is known as the supply bill. It's an opportunity for the Legislature to, in effect, vote the resources that the government needs to undertake its operations, and is traditionally a time for members of the Legislature to talk about the policies of the government in any area, as it involves the overall operations of the government. Certainly on our side, we're very proud of the story that we have to tell in terms of our focus on education, on health care, on services to the public in terms of infrastructure, in terms of energy—a chance to really outline the very ambitious program that our government has undertaken in the name of Ontarians: a future-looking program which I know members will want to reflect upon this afternoon as they debate the bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the opportunity to engage in debate on the supply bill, the supply motion, and to talk at this time about the finances of our magnificent province that is right now going through some significant challenges as a result of our heavy debt and deficit load in this fiscal year.

What concerns me, of course, is that we have had before us a report, namely the Drummond report, with a substantial number of recommendations that have warned this government that if they continue on their spending spree and their scandals and their tax hikes, we will probably see, in the next few years, a $30-billion deficit and a $440-billion debt.

What does that mean, Speaker? Well, let me tell you what that means. The third-largest spending priority in this government, outside of health care and education, is servicing our debt. What does that mean? Well, it means that every single dollar that is used to service the debt and deficit is a dollar being taken away from key priorities like health care and education. That is deeply concerning to me as a member of provincial Parliament,

but also as a mother, because what this government has done over the past eight and half, close to nine years, is continually mismanage the public purse.

Today we were told about the Ornge scandal and how bad it was. In fact, this government blindly signed an agreement to allow Ornge to set up a number of for-profit companies. Can you believe that? Only after they were caught being asleep at the switch—or perhaps they just didn't care—they offer us a piece of legislation. Instead, what we would have preferred is ministerial accountability, because, as I said, a $30-billion deficit and a $440-billion debt means we're servicing that debt and deficit and that money is coming from other priorities.

Then, when you add on top of that mismanagement and you see a scandal where almost $1 billion was flushed down the toilet by Chris Mazza and this Liberal government, you wonder really what their priorities are. You wonder: Do they really even care about getting it right? And you wonder, Mr. Speaker, if they actually even understand the damage they've done to this province.

In the days ahead, my party, the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, led by Tim Hudak, will continue to call for the Minister of Health to resign. We will continue to call for a select committee of this Legislature to be established so that we can allow people across Ontario, particularly health care providers, to come in and talk about the waste that was at eHealth and—sorry—Ornge. We'll continue to probe for more answers to see how this government could have gotten it wrong—and wrong so badly, particularly with the backdrop of what Don Drummond has explained to us. It was quite catastrophic, as we move forward.

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Next week, we will see this Liberal government bring in another budget, and we'll still see another deficit. We will continue to see them—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Debt growing.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod:—grow the Ontario debt as they grow the Ontario deficit, at the cost of future priorities and current priorities. I look, for example, at some of the school boards across Ontario right now which are struggling with many of their capital costs. I know, for example—and this is where I'll have an opportunity to talk about my community of Nepean–Carleton, a fast-growing community, Mr. Speaker, as you know, one of the fastest growing in all of Canada. It is the fastest growing in the city of Ottawa, and where there used to be farmers' fields there's been an explosion of growth.

The population has expanded quite significantly, and in one of our schools, the Longfields Davidson Heights Secondary School, we have a grade 7 to 12 school that is over capacity, maximizing the use of portables, and they haven't even got to grade 12 yet, not to mention the new developments that are going to be around the community. So community leaders like Laura Lee Comeau, Taz Mawji, Anna Clement, Reshma Dalial, Norm MacDonald, Sue Patel, Ravinder Minhas and Christina Thiele have gone to bat. They've launched a petition campaign to go to the school board.

Of course Ottawa's a big city—there's lots of competing demands—as is Nepean–Carleton, which is growing, as I said, because we also have a great big community in Riverside South that right now doesn't have a public secondary school. And that's why parents like Scott Hodge, Craig Cudmore, Alison Vitniemi, Kathy Michells, Mike Marshall, Jared Langdon, Krista Matthews, our school board trustee Mark Fisher, Bev L'Anglais, Brenda Knight, Dave Wardis, Ted Garan, Peter Cantrell, Jen Johnson, Marion Breen, J.D. Dorman, Allison Vanstaden and Debbie Horsfall have all come together to do a community survey that they hope will convince the board to understand the high growth of these communities which just 10 years ago, 10 short years ago, were farmers' fields.

And as we proceed with those two high schools and the demand that is required in our community, and as our school board trustee Mark Fisher leads the charge at the board level, and these parents fight for ensuring that their tax dollars stay in their community, we also have a great need in a small village called Findlay Creek, just off of Bank Street, that was, ironically enough, formerly represented by a Liberal MPP. Sumana Jana, Carole Gallant, Bev L'Anglais and Eddie Rwema, who is with our local newspaper, have all been active in identifying what our community need is there.

Why did I bring all this up, Mr. Speaker? Well, as I've stated, when my community sees the scandal at Ornge and sees that this government took $730 million—almost $1 billion—and flushed it down the toilet—not once but twice, because you'll recall they did this with the eHealth debacle. When they understand that we have a—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): If we have a sidebar, could we take it out? It's a little loud. I can't hear the speaker. Thanks.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: As we, Speaker, talk about this $440-billion possible debt and that $30-billion deficit—and as I said, every dollar servicing that is one less dollar for our education system—my community gets a bit irritated. They've sent me here to Queen's Park to fight for them, and I think my reputation over the past six years I've been here is that I am a fighter for my community. I'll continue to do that and I'll never make an apology for it.

But let me say this: If, next week, this government continues on a path of tax-and-spend, where my constituents get less, less, less, less and less services for all the tax dollars that they're spending, I'm not going to be a happy person. I'm very disappointed that they have made the debt and deficit so large that they are spending so much money servicing that debt and deficit. It has become a detriment to the people of Nepean–Carleton, it has become a detriment to the people of Ontario and it has become a detriment to the future generations of this province. That is what this government has done, and this is what this government has consistently done since it has taken office.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham might want to be in his seat.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Next week, Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario will be watching to see how this government will get us out of this mess. They don't believe them. They don't have the confidence in them. They have not seen—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's the second time. If you want to speak, go to your seat.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: As I conclude my remarks, I look at the needs in our communities—and it's not just mine that has needs; it's across the entire province—and then I look at the waste and the scandal from those across the way. The reality is, it directly impacts the people who have sent us to this place to fight for them to ensure that their tax dollars are being spent wisely. They've continually ignored the people, particularly in rural Ontario, particularly in suburban Ontario, and they've not listened to their needs. Instead, they have misspent, they have brought us scandals—like I said, Ornge and eHealth. Now they want to expand gambling, and we all know the great success the OLG has become as an agency over the past number of years.

Speaker, I've lost confidence in this government. At some point this government will fall because effectively, after the last election, the public lost confidence in them as well. But I'll be watching them, as will our caucus, the Ontario PC caucus, led by Tim Hudak. We will challenge them each and every day so that they get it right. We'll continue to call for that Minister of Health to resign because of her mismanagement at Ornge, and we're going to continue to offer solutions to that debt and deficit crisis that is destroying the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: It's a pleasure to have this opportunity; it only comes around once a year. Although it's an interim supply motion, you can literally speak about anything you want: anything you think the government is doing right, which is often very hard to discern; or anything you think they're doing wrong, which is usually a pretty easy job.

Today, I want to take this opportunity to speak about the larger economic issues that are confronting this province and this Legislature and to try to give hopefully some direction to the party opposite when it brings down a budget next week. This budget, I fear, is going to be horrendously difficult for the people of Ontario.

Next week, there's going to be not one budget but two. There's going to be a budget delivered in the province, and two days later there's going to be a budget delivered in Ottawa. We are bracing ourselves, as ordinary people, for the worst. We are bracing ourselves because it's not going to be one hit; it's probably going to be two in pretty rapid succession. We are going to see the hopes and dreams of a generation put at some risk. We're going to see the hopes and dreams of a generation be constricted because governments are going to say there isn't any money, governments are going to talk about the deficits that they're running, they're going to be talking about the programs they're going to kill, they're going to talk about the jobs that aren't going to be created, and they're going to do everything in the high priesthood of orthodoxy to make sure that somehow, some way, that $16 billion is reduced. People are bracing themselves.

We know in Ontario today there is much sadness in the province. If you have an opportunity, as I know most members have, to travel around the province, even if all it is is going back to your riding on Thursday nights, you will know that people are unhappy. You will know that there are rising costs for food and for hydro and for transportation and for energy. You will know, if you talk to your constituents, that they are having an increasingly difficult time making ends meet. They're having to skimp on things they did not skimp on before, whether it be new clothes for themselves or their children, whether it be restaurant meals, whether it be a night out at the movies. Some of these things are becoming luxuries as increasingly they have to pay their bills and there is less and less money available for them to do what they once considered life's pleasures.

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At the same time, you also have to know that there is rising unemployment in this province. It has been pretty stagnant above 8% for a long time. We probably have among the highest unemployment rates in the entire country, and they do not appear to be going down. We know there were 600,000 jobs lost in the last number of years, particularly in the manufacturing and forestry sectors of our economy. We know, if you come from southwestern Ontario—if you come from Windsor—that there is an 11% unemployment rate.

I'm fortunate to own a summer property down near Windsor, and it's pretty sad to go into that town. It's pretty sad to go into Windsor and see the boarded-up stores. But Windsor is not alone. You can go almost anywhere in southwestern Ontario to towns that were once vibrant and filled with working people and see shut-up shops, factories that aren't operating anymore, people unemployed, despair and houses for sale at a fraction of their cost.

If you go to London today—a mighty, wonderful city—you'll see it has a 9% unemployment rate, and you'll see that people there are pretty unhappy.

Come to Toronto: 275,000 people are looking for work. That's a lot of people—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Is that it?

Mr. Michael Prue: —275,000 are looking for work.

If you go to northern Ontario, if you get a chance to get up there, see all those tracts of land that aren't being forested anymore, see the mills and the factories that have been closed, see the despair.

Go through small towns that are now ghost towns, where the houses aren't even for sale anymore; they're just boarded up. Nobody lives there.

Ask an ordinary Ontarian what it's like. Last year, the average wage increase was 0.7%. We might look around

and say, "Well, that's good. It's something." Except inflation was 2.5%. And if you include inflation in the last 15 years, the people of this province have not gained any headway at all—none at all. There has been no progress for the last 15 years with wages in this province.

So, what do we have? What do we need? We need a budget that is going to create jobs. If the government only does one thing, please have a budget that you know is going to create jobs. We are sick of the argument of the past that all you had to do was reduce corporate taxes and jobs would spring to life. If ever there was a misguided economic statement—a trickle-down theory, something promulgated out of the far right of the United States—that is it. It hasn't worked in Ontario; it will never work in Ontario.

At the same time as we create jobs, we need to make life more affordable, particularly for people who are now finding themselves, for the first time in their lives, on the margins.

I see today in this province a disturbing attack on the agricultural sector. I've witnessed, over the last couple of sessions in this House, members of the government stand up and pit the agricultural sector, particularly those people involved in horses and horse racing, against the rest of the population. Why is it that we have to choose losing 60,000 jobs that are based around horse racing, farming, hay growing and all of those things in Ontario, and stand up time after time and minister after minister and member after member on the other side and say, "We need that money for schools and hospitals"? Of course we need money for schools and hospitals, but can we afford to lose 60,000 jobs of people who make a major contribution to this province?

Not everything is a widget. Not everything is made in a factory. We have a history here. We have a history that goes back hundreds of years of raising farm animals and horses. We raised them to work in the fields. We raised them to pull our carriages in the past. We raise them today, in many respects, for horse racing, whether it be thoroughbred racing or whether it be standardbred.

People are in here today from the racing industry, looking for answers, wanting to be consulted about why this government is choosing to rid itself of 60,000 jobs in Ontario. I know the government needs money. My God, the government needs money. But why is it that they have to pay that price? Why do we have to have 60,000 more people unemployed, people who have spent their life in the care of animals, people who know that industry better than they will probably know any other industry?

I talked to a man today; I've talked to several of them. Oftentimes the people who work in this industry have been there for a long time. They don't have a lot of formal education. They don't live in a big city. They don't have access to industrial work, even though that's declining. What they know is farming and the issues around farming; horses and the issues around horses. You're going to take away their livelihood. If you take away their livelihood, what are they going to do? They are gainfully employed. You are going to make them unemployable. You are going to force them onto welfare rolls. You are going to destroy their livelihoods and their families.

I don't understand. A budget is supposed to help people get work. Doing what the minister is saying he wants to do, doing what the Minister of Education is saying she wants to do with this money, is not going to keep those people in a job and is going to exacerbate an already bad situation.

Nobody is talking about keeping jobs in Canada. I didn't hear anything on the other side except some platitudes when Caterpillar decided to shut down in London. Here's a foreign multinational that comes in and takes over, gets the intellectual property, sizes up the situation, tells the workers they're going to earn half as much—if they don't like it, they're moving to Indiana—and then promptly, the day that workers say, "We reject half-wages, only getting half as much, and losing all our benefits," it packs up and moves to Indiana. Nary a word. Nary a word from this government.

There was a time, when I was a little younger, when this would have raised every single voice in this Legislature, when every one of you would have stood here and demanded—there would have even been calls from the government side, never mind the NDP—to nationalize such an industry rather than allow what happened in London to happen. We don't hear that. "That's just 600 more jobs gone. We don't need to be involved in that. We're looking for other ways. We're looking at doing other things. We're going to build a casino in Toronto. Maybe one or two of them can get a job there." That's what we're hearing today.

I have to tell you I have some very real difficulties with the attitude. We also have a whole loss of public sector jobs. Information is starting to leak out of the ministries, in case the ministers haven't heard these themselves. The layoffs are starting. People are coming to us, telling us they've been working there for 10 and 15 years in some of the ministries and they've been told their job's gone. There's going to be hundreds, if not thousands, of people who will lose their jobs there too.

I want to contrast all of that with what's happening in Quebec. I opened up the newspaper today. Yesterday, Quebec had its budget. Quebec is a have-not province—at least, it was. Quebec was a have-not province. We always sent money to them. We sent them a lot of money. Even though they're going to get a little bit of money this year, they are going to get considerably less than Ontario. And Quebec, this year, is going to run a $1.2-billion deficit—not a $16-billion deficit; a $1.2-billion deficit. Next year, they are on target to have a surplus of $2.5 billion. That's Quebec. Do you know what's happening there? The government is creating jobs. The government is creating jobs in the resource sector because the resource sector jobs are going there because Quebec has a better electrical strategy and energy strategy than this government has ever thought of. The jobs are going to Quebec, and Quebec is becoming a have province.

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I'm really quite impressed with them. I'm really quite impressed when you read what is happening there. They're expanding on their social programs. They're keeping their people employed. They're not laying off all their public employees. They have an eye to the future. Would that Ontario had the same eye. Maybe we'll see next Tuesday; maybe I'm guessing this wrong, but from the vibes coming here and the things that are being said by the Minister of Finance, I don't think so. I think something here is terribly, terribly wrong.

We need revenues, and I haven't heard too much. The NDP was heartened a little bit a few weeks ago. We've been on a long time about corporate tax cuts and whether we can afford them any longer, whether they are creating the kinds of jobs that were promised, because we certainly know that investment from the corporate sector in either jobs, training or new development of machinery is simply not taking place. It has declined from 8% to 6% in spite of the fact we keep giving more and more money away.

We've raised this issue for a long time. Here's just a few little notes in the past of what's going on. When we first started to raise this issue, we got the following response from the Minister of Finance on February 24, 2011: "What the NDP want to do is create jobs in Alberta." We continued on. We kept asking this question, and we got from the Minister of Finance on February 24, 2011—same day—"The Ontario NDP plan will kill jobs." Then, a few months later, on October 2, 2011, the Minister of Finance again: "Ontarians know a vote for the NDP means killing jobs." Then we've got some more. The Minister of Finance on September 13, 2011, when the NDP proposed an end to the corporate tax giveaway for high-priced meals and box seats said, and I quote, "It represents killing a huge job-creation initiative"—Minister of Finance. On September 9, 2011, "'The NDP's plan is a crushing job killer,' given the party's promise to scrap corporate tax cuts, said Finance Minister Dwight Duncan."

When we tabled a motion—I don't want to leave the honourable member from Ottawa Centre out even for a second—in December calling for a halt to further corporate tax cuts, here's what Ontario Liberal Party president and Ottawa Centre MPP said: "The motion that is being presented by the NDP ... is going to harm Ontario's economy in these tough economic times. It is not going to help in terms of creation of new jobs. I really urge all members to vote against this motion, because what we need to do at this moment is to ensure that Ontario is a good place to do business."

We know the Ontario Liberal Party has been dragged kicking and screaming towards the inevitability that the corporate tax giveaway has been an ultimate and total failure as an economic plan by this government. You know that although they have got increased corporate tax reductions, no jobs have been created out of it. You know that it has made not one iota of difference. When you look to other provinces that have taken different avenues, they are all more successful than we are.

We have, in fact, become a have-not province under your economic direction and leadership. You have not looked at what is good for the people of this province, only what is good for the wealthiest few. You want corporate box seats. You want tax writeoffs for going to sports games. You want restaurants and golf courses to be tax writeoffs so that people can go out there and have a great time with corporate money. But you don't want to look after ordinary people who are starting to suffer.

We find this really difficult. We have already the lowest corporate tax of any of the Great Lakes states. It's 10% lower than all of them. We have lower corporate tax rates than the United States, Australia, Finland, France, Germany, Korea, India, the United Kingdom and a whole host of other countries, some of which are a lot more successful than us. We have no investment in jobs at the same time.

The HST and lower corporate income tax rates have transferred roughly $10 billion into the corporate sector from the treasury, on top of all the corporate tax handouts from the federal government. Ontario governments have paid the price through higher taxes and levies on the basics. Over that same period, investment as a share of GDP has declined steadily over the past decade, from 8% to 6%. And instead of investing, what are corporations doing? They're sitting on that. The profits are higher than they've ever been before.

We believe that we need to change the strategy. We have implored this government to give money to corporations that produce jobs, that invest in training, that have new machinery, new ways of technology. If they don't invest, then they don't get tax cuts. Don't give them money so that they can have a corporate box at the Rogers Centre, so that they can go and eat gourmet meals in a high-priced restaurant and so that they can sign off all of it against the public dollar. We need to start doing things more wisely. Quebec has done that; Manitoba has done that; many jurisdictions across North America have done that. Even Rick Santorum, that left-wing guy from the United States, is talking and saying the same kind of stuff: If you don't invest in creating jobs, don't expect a handout from the state. And if he's finally come to that conclusion, I find it very difficult to understand why the members of the government opposite have not been able to come to that same ready conclusion.

Now, there are many things we can talk about today. I did want to briefly talk about Ornge, but I'm going to leave most of that to my colleague the member from Nickel Belt, because she's really more up to speed on this.

Government can be very careful in how it spends money or it can spend it without having due regard to the public purse. I listened today to the minister as she brought forward a new bill. I'm trying to be charitable. I'm trying to say that even though the horse has bolted from the door, she wants to do something about this. Let's be charitable. But the horse should never have been allowed out of that door in the first place. We need to know that government has tremendous opportunity and

the ability to monitor and be sure that the public money is being spent wisely. We ask ordinary, sensible questions. We asked last year why the head of Ornge, Mr. Mazza, was not on the sunshine list. He was on the sunshine list in 2008. Why was he not on the sunshine list in 2009? Because it was—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, it was all buried.

Interjection: Secret.

Mr. Michael Prue: It was all secret. This is something that this government should never have allowed to happen, and we cannot have these secrets anymore. Ordinary people are becoming frustrated. They're becoming angry. They are wanting in some cases revenge against governments and against politicians, and I'm telling you that we have to act. If Quebec can do the right thing, then we should be able to do it.

We don't need this government to come down with an austerity budget and then watch, two days later, when the people of Ontario get whacked by a federal budget that is going to do much the same thing. We expect and we hope for leadership from the finance minister. We hope for and we expect leadership from the back bench of the Liberal Party. Stand up. Let your voices be heard. Let those in the cabinet know that there is an unease in that party, as I know there must be; that there is an unease with the direction that is being followed and that you want to change it, that you want the Liberal Party to stand up for what you used to stand up for, and that was ordinary people; and you are not going to take it any more when we stand by and have jobs and lives destroyed with nothing to show for it other than, you know, somebody in a corporate box at a big centre.

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Mr. Speaker, I just want to close by asking everybody to be mindful of that. I want everybody to be prepared for next Tuesday. We New Democrats will listen very, very carefully to what is being said during the budget. Do not for a minute assume that we will support a budget that will harm ordinary people. Do not assume that for one second, because it will not happen. You have to do what is right for the people of Ontario, even though that may cause some pain to your corporate friends. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak today on Bill 46, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012, or in other words, the Supply Act, as we like to refer to this particular bill.

It's important to talk a little bit about the background—I like the technicalities of these bills. Many members wonder what these bills are about. We had an interim supply motion, and now we're talking about the Supply Act. The Supply Act is one of the cornerstone acts in the Legislature. If passed, this bill would give the government the authority to finance its programs and honour its commitments. It's an important bill, so I urge that all members vote in support of this bill, because we're talking about the expenses that occur in the current fiscal year, which will end on March 31, 2012, and this Legislature has given permission to the government to make those expenditures.

Without this bill, the spending authority of the government does not exist, and the government would not be able to provide the public services to the people of Ontario that they count on so much. The government's spending authority for the current fiscal year is provided through the Interim Appropriation for 2011-2012 Act, 2010, and the Supplementary Interim Appropriation Act, 2011. These acts were required to provide spending authority until the Legislature could complete the voting of supply.

Let me be clear, Speaker: The proposed Supply Act does not authorize any new spending. It would include spending authority provided by the interim appropriation acts and would repeal those two statutes. So the two statutes we passed in previous sessions are the ones that gave the government the spending authority that is ongoing, and now, by voting for this particular bill, Bill 46, the Supply Act, we will be repealing those two previous bills, the interim and supplementary bills—

Interjection.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I think this is important information, member—and then ensuring that those authorities are embedded in this particular bill.

I think it's important that I provide some additional context. Next week, the Minister of Finance, as is known, will be tabling this government's ninth provincial budget and the first of our new mandate. Speaker, the 2012 budget will build on the progress that has been achieved since 2003 in protecting our education and health care systems, and making our province the very best that it can be. And it will lay out key measures to help us not only reduce the deficit but eliminate it by 2017-18, because it is absolutely essential that the deficit be eliminated by 2017-18; there should be no debate about that. The confidence in our economy depends on it: the confidence of Ontario businesses, small and large; the confidence of international investors, of international credit rating agencies, of our key trading partners; and of course, the confidence of Ontario families. Confidence demands that we take concrete action together to eliminate the deficit.

On February 15, the Drummond Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services delivered sobering advice on how it recommends eliminating the deficit. The commission also painted a picture of how we got here, and I think that's an important conversation frame to have.

Changing economic conditions have hit Ontario harder than other provinces over the past decade. The reasons are simple. Beginning in 2003, the Canadian dollar began a strong ascent. The surge in the currency made Ontario's exports more expensive for foreigners to buy. The impact on Ontario's economy was huge. The province's international trade surplus disappeared by the middle of 2006 and was replaced by a trade deficit.

In my past life, I've been a trade lawyer. My job was to work with a lot of Canadian businesses which sell their products, most of them—especially in the manufacturing sector located in Ontario—selling their products—mostly goods but also services—to other markets around the world, primarily to the United States of America, where the low Canadian dollar was the biggest advantage they had because that made their goods and services cheaper in foreign markets, especially in the US. It gave them that competitive advantage to sell their goods and services. Of course, foreign investors, American investors in particular, were always keen to purchase Ontario goods and services. With a high Canadian dollar, we have seen that competitive advantage disappear significantly, making it difficult for our businesses, especially our manufacturers, to sell in the US market.

The Canadian dollar is key to that business planning, and manufacturers very much rely on that. Of course, as a result of the high dollar, by a reduction in our manufacturing and those market opportunities, Ontario businesses and Ontario families have paid the price and continue to pay the price. In other words, the high dollar may be good for other parts of Canada, but it has been very harmful to Ontario.

The Drummond commission described two other factors adding to Ontario's economic challenge. First, while the recession caused the rest of the Canadian economy to shrink for three quarters, it hit Ontario a lot harder, causing our economy to shrink for four quarters. Second, the federal government continues to take a lot of our tax dollars out of Ontario for distribution to the rest of the country. For example, in 2012-13, while Ontario taxpayers will contribute $6 billion to the equalization program, the Ontario government will receive approximately $3.3 billion in return. That's half of what we contribute in the equalization scheme.

We are proud to support public services in other provinces; however, the McGuinty government has long maintained that Ontarians send too many of our tax dollars to the federal government for distribution to the rest of Canada. Over the last 10 years, Ontarians have contributed more than $50 billion to that particular program. Our government is looking for the federal government to work with the provincial and territorial governments to modernize the federal-provincial fiscal arrangement to support the sustainable delivery of public services. In the meantime, the challenge we are facing is significant. Ontario's deficit currently stands at $16 billion.

Speaker, we all probably remember that up to 2008 we had a balanced budget. The McGuinty government had a track record of not only inheriting the deficit that the previous Conservative government left in 2003—$5.6 billion in total—but then taking specific actions to reduce that deficit to the point of eliminating it and then delivering three back-to-back-to-back balanced budgets right here in this Legislature. But we cannot forget the global forces at play. A lot of time, when we're hearing from the opposition, somehow we get the impression that Ontario exists in a vacuum, or somehow this government seems to be only making economic policy, with no impact as to what's happening in the global sphere.

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In 2008-09, we saw a devastating global recession that not only impacted the economy in Ontario but had a significant impact on the economy in Canada and in fact crippled many economies around the world. If you look at the reason behind the current $16-billion deficit, Speaker, you will see that it is as a result of the steps that our government took in order to fight the recession in Ontario, investments that we made in infrastructure in every single community across this province—every single one—not just communities represented by government, but also by both official opposition parties. We've heard from other members who talk about the investments and now, if those investments are not being made or are jeopardized, have concerns about them. But that was done because we were able to borrow money so that we could fight the recession and ensure that we stimulated the economy to create those jobs so that we don't get into a deep, deep recession.

We were not alone. If you look at the federal government on its own, they did the same thing. In fact, they've also amassed a massive deficit as a result of the measures that they had to take, the borrowing that they had to undertake to fight the deficit. That's a different government, a different political party, the Conservative Party. So you cannot argue that it's a way of doing of one political party alone. It's a concerted effort that everybody took to ensure that we deal with the recession, that we stimulate the economy and that we work together to ensure that our economy is growing. And we've seen that.

So that's the challenge, that's where the $16-billion deficit comes from. Of course, now it's imperative that we take this challenge and balance the books—as the economy is getting stronger, as jobs are being created—and eliminate this deficit so that we can continue to strengthen our economy, create jobs and of course provide quality public services, health care and education.

This challenge is not entirely unprecedented. As I mentioned, governments of all stripes have been dealing with it. In fact, since 1990 four governments of three different parties have done so. In the 21 years since then, net borrowing has decreased only once in the province of Ontario, and that was just because of an accounting change. Governments have taken this path because they could rely on economic growth to keep the debt-to-GDP ratio sustainable.

Relatively speaking, Ontario is a low-tax province. This is a trend that has been developing for many years. In fact, tax revenues today are 11.6% of GDP, almost 15% lower than they were in 1994. And still we've been hitting our expense targets. Over many years, Ontario has built expertise at delivering supportive, high-quality public services with low administrative costs. In fact, Ontario's per capita spending is among the lowest of Canada's 10 provinces. This was recognized by the

Drummond commission as well. Last year, we reported that spending growth had been cut to about 4%. So far this year, we are tracking to keep growth in spending to about 2.5%.

The challenges are, in this environment, to eliminate the deficit and deliver the quality services families need. We will meet these challenges. That's what strong leadership means. We will build on the tax reform, infrastructure investments and other actions Ontarians have already taken to increase the prospects for economic growth in Ontario.

All of us have a role to play, every single one of us. As a government, we have to do what families are doing in their own homes: We have to live within our means.

The good news is that this is the right time to be taking action. Our economy continues to grow, and Ontario continues to create jobs. Ontario's GDP grew in the third quarter of 2011 at 2.7% on an annualized basis. Job growth in the province accounted for more than 45% of all jobs created in Canada in 2011.

Ontarians have made tremendous progress over the last eight years. We have modernized the tax system by introducing the HST and bringing in significant tax cuts for both people and business. The tax plan for jobs and growth has also positioned Ontario for growth. Our province, our home, is recognized as a good place to invest. It is the second-most-attractive place for foreign investment in North America, and Forbes magazine, among others, credits much of the work we have done for this fact.

To build on this growth, Ontario must confront another challenge. The 2009 budget took the bold step of transforming Ontario's tax system into one of the most competitive in the world. We have turned around health care and education, and are now getting world-leading results in both. Now we must transform the way public services are delivered and eliminate the deficit.

Speaker, Ontario is open to change and innovation. We will build on reforms to the way government operates to ensure that Ontario families receive the best public services possible. We are reviewing every program, every asset and every function of government. We will transform operations to ensure that Ontario families are receiving the best possible service.

We will not make across-the-board cuts, Speaker. I repeat: We will not make across-the-board cuts. Instead, we will make careful, thoughtful choices; choices that reflect the priorities of Ontarians.

Let me give you a few specific examples. Faced with the choice of hanging on to LCBO's prime downtown Toronto real estate and strengthening our schools, we choose schools. And if we have to choose between subsidizing horse racing and funding home care, Speaker, we choose home care.

We will continue to make thoughtful choices before our budget, in our budget and after our budget until we balance our budget and the finances of our province. That's the plan. That's how we will tackle our deficit: thoughtful choices guided by the values that Ontarians share.

The more we are able to transform the way we deliver—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This is the last warning to the member from Durham. If he wants to make comments, as I said earlier—and I'll reiterate for him—go back to his seat.

Mr. John O'Toole: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There's no point of order, and humour is not appreciated. Last warning.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate your attention to this important issue.

Speaker, as I was saying, the more we are able to transform the way we deliver public services, the less we will have to cut. That means we will be better able to protect schools and health care, the services that matter most to Ontarians.

Ontarians have placed their confidence in our government to keep a steady hand on the tiller and steer us toward a stronger economy. That is exactly what we are doing and will continue to do. We will eliminate the deficit. We will keep strengthening our economic fundamentals.

We have put the right plan in place for the times, a plan to strengthen Ontario's economy for future growth and prosperity. Now, each of us has to do our part in moving that plan forward, whether it's businesses that need to continue making the necessary investments to increase productivity or those of us in the public sector who need to strive constantly to ensure we are delivering the best value and the best public services to Ontarians.

I firmly believe, Speaker, that there is no place better prepared to weather economic storms and better positioned to grow and take advantage of new opportunities than Ontario.

Eliminating the deficit isn't just about the numbers. It's about building the rock-solid foundation families need to support their jobs, their schools, their health care and their future. It's about acting responsibly. It's about building a bright future for our children and grandchildren.

That's a large part of why I urge all honourable members to support this Supply Act. Without it and without the necessary spending authority, no government would be able to deliver to the people of Ontario the public services they depend on.

Our challenges may be significant, but so is our willingness to do the work and our determination to succeed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak this afternoon on Bill 46, an act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year.

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While I was listening to the member from Ottawa Centre explain an appropriations or a supply bill, I can

understand and see now why, as he said, in his past life he was a lawyer and not a teacher, and that he's now been reincarnated as a Dalton McGuinty Liberal, after that explanation.

The government House leader, when he introduced this bill for second reading, said that this bill was part of the Liberal story, and he was proud of that story. Well, let's put that story to test. I guess what I would say is, that story, especially today, in light of the Ornge scandal—another billion dollars to pile on the heap of previous scandals—the real Liberal story is, "What's another billion?" Maybe that will be their campaign slogan next time around: "What's another billion? We might as well just pile a few more on."

But here is the real story: Every time a bill gets introduced by this Liberal government, it's an expenditure bill. It's a money bill. They're spending money—surprise, surprise, every time. Whether it was the bill for the southwest Ontario development fund, the seniors' tax credit, the education tax credit—every bill that they put in is an expenditure bill, and then, of course, this still follows through with the Drummond report. Of course, the Drummond report said, "Let's hold off here. Let's"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry. It seems that members are forgetting to acknowledge the Chair. It's not so much me; it's the Chair. So when you come in and out of this chamber, we would like an acknowledgement of the Chair. Thank you.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. It's always good for people to remember the proper conventions here.

The real story about all these bills, in light of the Drummond report, is that this Liberal government keeps spending money. When you really look at the story, the story that I see with this Liberal government is that every time they come back with their hand out and spending more money, the picture of a gambling addict, staggering back after rolling the dice once too many times—staggers back to the House, staggers back to the benefactors, promising, promising, promising that they'll not do this again: "Just one more handout. Just one more bunch of money and I promise I won't roll the dice anymore." But we know that that is the Liberal way: just spend, spend, spend.

Let's look at their track record as they've taken Ontario into have-not status for the first time in our history as a province. Let's say you look at their expenditures and what has happened with the average, everyday resident and citizen in Ontario. In their eight years, they've doubled the debt. They've put more than $100 billion more in debt on the backs of the residents of Ontario. During that time, under their abysmal leadership, the real GDP growth per capita in this province has been 0.84%—less than 1% real GDP growth in Ontario; $347 more in real dollars is what an individual in Ontario has today as when the Liberals first took power. And for that $347 more, they've got over $100 billion more in debt. We've got a $16-billion deficit. We have over 600,000 people unemployed. We've got a higher unemployment rate than the national average. And, of course, we have Ornge, which they're so proud of over on the other side.

Mr. Speaker, this House leader said that he was proud of this story, proud of this story of abysmal economic performance and an abysmal spending record that has put Ontario in our worst fiscal position ever in our history—ever.

Just to give you an example of what sort of spending: As the average taxpayer in this province has seen their real per capita growth grow by 0.84% in eight years, the rate of government spending has been over 7% each and every year of the McGuinty government.

The rising costs of public servants: There was a story in yesterday's paper about how, under the McGuinty term, a first-class constable, a police officer in this province, eight years ago was making $59,000; he's now at $84,000. That's a lot more than 0.84%. About 30% has been the increase of our costs of public servants, and this government is proud of it, while a taxpayer has less than a 1% growth in money to pay for their wasteful, ridiculous, abysmal economic policies.

I'm glad the government House leader is proud of that story. I'm looking forward to the next election campaign, when they bring forth that slogan, "What's another billion? What's another eHealth? What's another Ornge?" I'm looking forward to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to start out by thanking the member from Beaches–East York for his pointed words about the Drummond report and about the upcoming budget. I think we all need to take some time to reflect over the next couple of days on those words.

I want to spend my time talking a bit about Niagara, the Welland riding and south Niagara. The unemployment rate in southwestern Ontario and Niagara is between 9% and 11%. My riding is probably the third worst in the province. The incomes of workers in this area have fallen to only 0.7% increases, while the cost of living and inflation is at 2.5%.

Just recently, on March 15, there was a report released from the Niagara Workforce Planning Board. It's called Benchmarking Niagara, and it compared the Niagara region to 34 similar-sized communities across Canada. Unfortunately, the news there was grim, and I'm going to share a little bit about that with you.

In Niagara, the growth was only 12.3% as opposed to 20.5% to 21.5% everywhere else in the 34 communities. In 1996, we had 186,000 jobs in Niagara, which grew to 212,500 jobs. Unfortunately, most of those jobs are accommodation, food workers and retail. They're not manufacturing jobs. We lost 13,700 manufacturing jobs in our area in about an 11-year period.

I want to thank the Niagara Workforce Planning Board. And by the way, Mr. Drummond is suggesting that we need to consolidate the workforce planning boards across the province. I want to thank them for their

report. I want to thank their CEO, David Alexander, for bringing this forward.

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So although we had some improvements in jobs in those three areas, they're jobs that pay minimum wage or slightly better than minimum wage. They're not jobs that can support families. I know that my community is hurting, and I know that many of your communities are hurting as well. So, you know, at a time when our economy is the worst, the government has now laid off 210 more workers, in one of the worst economic areas in the province, at the Fort Erie slots. Now, these were jobs that actually paid far more than minimum wage and were supporting families in my riding and across Niagara. The cost of that has increased social services in the Niagara Peninsula, and there is a high cost of social services when there are no jobs in your area. Southern Ontario—in particular, Niagara and, I think, Hamilton—needs to have an economic development fund as well, and they need assistance from this government to develop their future economic plans and to bring good-quality, well-paid jobs to Niagara.

The NDP had a plan—it continues to have a plan—which would give corporate tax credits to those who create jobs, to those who provide on-the-job training, to those who invest in equipment and machinery, and that's what we need to do to create jobs in this province.

We also need greater access to upgrading skills, education for laid-off workers and unemployed workers, regardless of whether they're collecting EI benefits or not. Many of the workers in the manufacturing sector that got laid off, some of them are still unemployed, and they should have access to retraining as well.

Many people are holding down two or three part-time jobs, and they need flexible education and training programs geared to quality jobs that can support their families in our areas. They also need to acknowledge their areas of interest, and they need to be programs that don't take six or seven months to get approvals for.

Now, on the Drummond report, I've had an opportunity to review it, and I just want to share some of the highlights that are disturbing to me. It encourages more private, for-profit entities in health care. We have that already in home care, and what we have is personal support workers being paid minimum wage or slightly above minimum wage. We have personal support workers working for a number of care provider agencies, because they can only get part-time work.

I think that some of you in government and some from the official opposition attended a CUPE breakfast a couple of weeks ago, where we saw a video about the care that our seniors are getting in their homes. So to talk about having the lowest-paid worker to provide health care I don't think is in keeping with the comments that we've heard from the Minister of Health about having the right provider in the right place at the right time—and, I would add, for the appropriate period of time. That's the kind of care that we need, whether it be a personal support worker, a registered nurse, or a registered practical nurse. We can't just give all of health care to the lowest-paid worker. People are not widgets. We're not on an assembly line here, and patients need consistent, quality care.

The Drummond report is also suggesting consolidation of various programs and contracting out, privatizing a number of programs. I know from experience that that will lead to lower wages, no benefits, no pension plans, and—

Mr. Michael Prue: And higher costs.

Ms. Cindy Forster: And higher costs—that's right—and all for the sake of profit.

So closing the existing slots in Fort Erie, Sarnia and Windsor created job losses. Privatization of public safety training will affect the integrity of the programs and will create lower wages and job losses. Eliminating policing duties will decrease jobs and lower wages and benefits at a time when people are losing their jobs in this province. So it goes on and on.

Now is not the time to be cutting jobs; now is the time to be creating jobs that can support families with real wages, benefits and pensions, and I encourage the government to take a good look before they come forward with a budget that is going to continue to negatively impact the lives of Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I just want to make sure I pay close attention to the clock.

I believe this supply motion bill is important, but it really is a testimony of the lack of control, accountability and transparency of the McGuinty government. It's a full assessment, but I think the most recent—today, the Auditor General issued a report—Mr. Speaker, you'd be interested in this. You've referred to this report. It falls into this purview of health care, the largest part of the budget.

I think there are a couple of things in here that could be made—the point could easily be made. So I'm just going to let what the Auditor General of Ontario said—this is all available for constituents online. It's a report on the scandalous, outrageous, completely unacceptable practices in the Ministry of Health and the call for the minister to resign. Here's what has been said by the Auditor General. This is important. This is in the report.

Hansard, you can get this copy from me. You just repeat what I say, in case I get it right here. It says:

"In outlining its plans to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts in February 2006 regarding the corporation that would be responsible for Ontario's air ambulance services, the ministry committed to set standards and monitor performance against those standards to ensure that the 'end result will be improved care, improved access to service, increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of service, and the assurance of greater fiscal and medical accountability.'" That's right from the auditor. It goes on to say:

"As well, the ministry's original submission to Management Board of Cabinet"—these are the cabinet

minutes. They knew about this. This is 2006, and they've denied that here. Here's the key thing, Mr. Speaker, that you'd be most interested in because I know how much interest you take in this: that "the Ornge arrangement specified that obtaining and evaluating performance information of this nature would be an essential part of the ministry's oversight function."

There we have it. The minister, even now, in fairness—they're throwing George Smitherman under the bus, but this comes right back to the Premier. I'm quite surprised that Mr. McCarter, the Auditor General for the province of Ontario, had the courage—and I commend him for his professionalism and unencumbered views of the taxpayers of Ontario. He's commendable. They tried to fire him, actually. They didn't want to hire him back because he's so good at it.

There's another part here—and I'm just going to skip a bit, because some of it's even more troubling. These are his words again. On page 9, it says—there's more to it here: "... being flowed to a company called Ornge Global Holdings LP for Ornge's future purchase of limited partnership (ownership) units of that company." So, a limited partnership and ownership in a private company. "At the time of our audit, Ornge Global Holdings LP was owned by members of Ornge's senior management and the board." They severed off a private piece and funded it through government debt. They were the owners of it—and purchased a building and some helicopters here. Here's an example:

"In addition to purchasing 12 new helicopters, Ornge spent $28 million for 11 used and aging helicopters, planning to use them for less than two years while it waited for the new ones to be delivered. At the time of our audit, Ornge told us it believed this would be more cost-effective than entering into another service agreement with the service provider. Ornge obtained an external consultant's opinion"—and what did that cost, the consultant? They probably went out for dinner and went to Italy for a meeting. "At the time of our audit, Ornge was in the process of disposing of the 11 used helicopters for what was expected to be less than $8 million." So they lost $20 million in a year or two. This is tragic. It goes on here:

"Ornge has borrowed ... $300 million to finance, among other things, the purchase of the 12 new helicopters, 10 new airplanes, the 11 used helicopters and the new office building. This debt is included in provincial debt"—which the taxpayers of Ontario should be just outraged about. The budget is next week. I can't see what more damage they're going to do.

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Mr. Speaker, this is an indictment. We're calling—our leader, Tim Hudak, has been calling for an open, select committee with NDP, Conservative and Liberal members to get to the bottom of the disease in this organization. The leadership over here, the Minister of Health and the Premier, have full responsibility. Look, I'd like them to stand in this House and do two things: first, apologize, and then resign.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Nickel Belt.

M^me^ France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was listening so intently to the speaker that I was surprised when he sat down so quickly.

The first thing I wanted to add to the debate for the interim supply is what happened today when the Auditor General presented his report, and I will be spending a good portion of my time talking about this.

But today is also Dietitians Day, and you will see how it ties in to the supply motion quite nicely. I would like to take the time to recognize that today marks the third anniversary of Dietitians Day. This day spotlights the profession and reminds us that dietitians are the smart choice for advice on proper eating, good nutrition and healthy living. As everyone might know, March is Nutrition Month and we are in the month of March.

This year, the Dietitians of Canada, the national professional association for dietitians, is focusing on clearing up nutrition myths. It can often be difficult to navigate nutritional information, competing claims of what is healthy and what is not and the science behind nutrition. Dietitians can help to translate all of these messages into real food that meets each individual's unique dietary needs, taste and lifestyle.

As we watch our health care costs—and this is where it becomes interesting, Mr. Speaker—rise in this province, dietitians can help us to focus more on preventive measures. We had an excellent report yesterday from the cancer society and Ontario public health that focused on health promotion and disease prevention. This holds great opportunities for cost savings to our health care system while making people healthy, like the dietitians are doing.

A healthy diet can help to prevent costly conditions like heart disease and diabetes, as well as help manage existing ones and provide care that complements treatments. The dietitians in Ontario are working to improve access to nutritional information and healthy food options for all Canadians, and I certainly support the great work that they do. It would certainly pay off if this Legislative Assembly was to do this.

You will all remember that I introduced a bill called the Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating Act. Basically, what the bill is about is to talk about menu labelling. Next time you go for your favourite fast food—I will pick McDonald's for one—not only would you see "Big Macs—$2.99," but you would also see "450 calories." We would put nutritional information directly on the menu board. That doesn't cost the government a cent. It is already being done in huge parts of the States, so it's not like McDonald's and all of the big ones will have to reinvent the wheel, because they've already modified their menu board. If you go to any restaurant in New York City right now, you will see this for their food and their drinks. Why aren't we bringing this to Ontario?

It would help with childhood obesity. A couple of weeks ago, we supported a private member's bill that will make the month of May childhood obesity—I'm

hoping eradication—month. There are steps that the government could take in these times of huge deficit that don't add to the public purse but that certainly pays off huge dividends.

So I wanted to salute today the dietitians of Ontario. It is the third anniversary of their special day, and some of the ideas that they put forward, targeted on keeping people healthy, will go a long way.

Coming back to the report from Cancer Care Ontario, if we were to tackle the four big ones, Mr. Speaker—smoking, exercise, healthy weight and healthy diet—if we were to tackle those four, we could get rid of 80% of all cancers. Think about the impact that would have. Think about the impact that would have on the people of Ontario: 80% less cancer if we were to do a good job on the four main ones.

But we don't have a health promotion ministry anymore in Ontario, and I certainly haven't seen any bills that remotely tackle health promotion or disease prevention. What we got instead today was a bill focused on Ornge. That bill came because—my good friend here is reading my notes; I'm going to share some of my notes with him. This bill came because the Auditor General published a special report on Ornge, the air ambulance service in Ontario. For the last many, many weeks in this House—almost daily—I have risen in this House and asked the minister questions about what happened at Ornge. I've been getting the same answer pretty much all the time. But—as I see the clock is ticking here—what was released in the report of the auditor, although I have been actively working that file daily for weeks, still shocked me and disappointed me.

What we get in the auditor's report, in black and white for everybody to read—I'm on page 12, if you're interested—is that the red flag had been raised; the red flag had been presented to the Ministry of Health. The Minister of Health says, after January 2011, that when we got this letter that says, "Here's the web of for-profit companies that has been spun off of Ornge," the not-for-profit, red flags went up. She says that they tried to do follow-up as best they could. She used the words, "We continue to do the work" of trying to get to the bottom of this, trying to make sure that public money was not used for for-profit companies. But then the Auditor General was also doing his work. When he presented his interim report to the minister in September, was he welcomed with open arms? Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. He was told, "Oh, no. You're overreacting, Mr. Auditor General. All is fine at Ornge."

Well, those two statements don't jibe, Mr. Speaker. You cannot on one hand tell us that you have tried to get answers but were stonewalled, and then get the Auditor General to give you an interim report and not welcome the extra information that the auditor was bringing forward.

They doubted the auditors, and only after it hit the media did the minister, for the first time ever, call the Auditor General and ask for a meeting—only after it hit the media. It didn't matter that the report had been tabled. It didn't matter that they had an internal auditor do the work and raise the red flag and tell them to act. They never did—only after it hit the media, and then they acted.

To this, I say that the minister has a duty to protect the health care system and to protect taxpayers' dollars, and she failed at both of them and should resign.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have the opportunity this afternoon to speak to the supply motion on behalf of the people of Wellington–Halton Hills, whom I'm so honoured and privileged to represent.

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Let's talk about health care first, as it's the most important service the provincial government delivers and it tends to be a top-of-mind concern, not only for my constituents but across the province. The hub of the wheel of health care in small-town Ontario is the local hospital. In Wellington–Halton Hills we are fortunate to have two fine hospitals: in Centre Wellington the Groves Memorial Community Hospital, and in Halton Hills the Georgetown Hospital.

In the last provincial Parliament, I spent a considerable amount of time advocating for a new Groves Memorial Community Hospital and urging the government to financially support the planned renovations to the Georgetown Hospital. I drew upon my 21 years of experience as a member of provincial Parliament to push the government to support these projects in every way that I could. But as I've said many times, what's said in the Legislature in support of a hospital project matters little if the project doesn't make sense; and what's said in the Legislature matters little if the project doesn't have strong community support.

Both the new Groves Hospital and the Georgetown Hospital projects made good sense and had the requisite community support that the government could not ignore. I believe it is now my role to hold the government to the commitments it has made to my constituents on the Groves and Georgetown hospitals. I put the government on notice: I will not be silent if there is any indication whatsoever that the promises the minister made to our communities are in any way broken. We await next week's budget.

In the meantime, we read in today's Globe and Mail some very troubling news. Anonymous sources have apparently told Adam Radwanski that hospital projects are "under the axe." Now, I've never promised my constituents a new hospital—never once. What I have promised repeatedly is my best efforts in support of our hospital projects. I haven't promised an outcome, but I've promised my best efforts to get us the outcome our communities need and deserve. I am here to say, on behalf of the people of Wellington–Halton Hills, that we will accept nothing less than what the government promised us before the election. I will hold this government to account for the promises it made to my constituents. If they lied to my constituents, I will not remain silent.

While we are talking about infrastructure, let's talk about the GTA West Corridor study. As members will recall, I raised my objections to alternative 4-3 in the Legislature many times and in many ways before Christmas. I continue to raise the concerns of my constituents. The council of the town of Halton Hills, the council of the region of Halton as well as an extremely well-organized local community group have come together to say that alternative 4-3 would damage our local environment and some of our treasured heritage and historical sites; pave over good, quality farmland; divide our community in half; and reduce our property values. Together, we have recommended a sensible, cost-effective alternative, backed up by a credible engineering consultant. If the ministry wants to ease traffic congestion through the GTA west area, they should seriously look at widening the 401. Surely in these challenging economic times, this would be a more cost-effective solution than building a brand new highway along alternative 4-3. They could use the money that they had saved and put the Morriston bypass on the ministry's five-year plan.

As you'll recall, Mr. Speaker, I've raised this project need with the government many times as well. Yesterday, I discussed it with the Minister of Transportation, urging him to meet with representatives from the township of Puslinch. I reminded him that this project would have a significant regional benefit for all of southern Ontario as it would ease the flow of traffic from Niagara region and the Hamilton area through to the 401. I was pleased with the minister's interest and favourable response, and I hope that his office will soon set up a meeting.

The third matter that I am compelled to bring to the attention of the House is the economic importance of the equine industry in Wellington–Halton Hills. On March 12, the McGuinty government announced that it had directed the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. to implement a number of proposals, including "stopping annual payments to the horse racing industry by ending the slots-at-racetracks program on March 31, 2013."

The equine industry has a significant presence in Wellington–Halton Hills. In fact, I would guess that many hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of my constituents are employed in the industry in one way or another, from the farmer to the horse people to the breeder to the veterinarian. It's an important component, even a pillar, of the economy of rural Ontario. While I firmly believe that the government of Ontario needs to get its spending under control, I do not believe that this should include measures which would kill the horse racing industry. I view the current funding arrangement not as a subsidy but as an agreement between the industry and the government which allowed for the installation of slot machines at racetracks, a revenue-sharing agreement which has been mutually beneficial for the horse racing industry as well as for the government.

On February 22, I was at the rally on the front lawn of the Legislature to show my support for the horse racing industry. I want to see Ontario's horse racing industry remain strong and vibrant for years to come. The Premier wants to frame this issue in a divisive way, pitting urban against rural Ontario. The Premier says, "If it's a choice between home care or horse racing, I choose home care." What utter nonsense. What about the billions wasted since he came to office in 2003? What about eHealth, the hundreds of millions of dollars thrown out the window? What about the annual Auditor General's reports listing page after page of extravagance, waste and inefficiency? What about Ornge, the air ambulance scandal? What about the growing sunshine list that comes out this Friday? What about the Ontario cricket club and the Liberal slush fund that was handed out before the 2007 election? What about the hundreds of millions of dollars that the government will have to pay in penalties for cancelling the gas-fired electricity plants in Oakville and Mississauga to prop up Liberal incumbents who were likely facing defeat?

Do they have any idea what the economic impact will be across the province? Where is the impact study? Has the Minister of Finance even done one? Why won't he table it in this House? What about the impact on the host municipalities? Does this not represent new downloading? Why doesn't he admit that the gaming market in Ontario is already saturated and he needs to close three slots facilities immediately to make way for the planned mega casinos that he intends to announce soon? Why doesn't he tell the people of Ontario that his vision of a 21st-century economy in Ontario is drawing desperate people to a mega casino and fooling them into emptying their pockets to satisfy a spending habit that he just can't break?

Mr. Speaker, the people of Wellington–Halton Hills believe in the promise of the future. They believe that with the right leadership, the right policies rooted in the right principles, Ontario's best days are yet to come. As their representative, I believe in the promise of the future as well, and it is increasingly clear to all of us on this side of the House that the promise of the future begins with the defeat of the McGuinty Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Close enough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: There you go. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's my pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 46, the supply motion, of course, which is necessitated by the fact that there must be monies available to fulfill the budget commitments, but it also gives us an opportunity to talk about the failures of this government.

We listened to the member from Ottawa Centre go on with a fantasy report about everything good that the McGuinty government has done since 2003, but he looks through rose-coloured glasses, as is his wont to do, and he only tells half the story.

I much more enjoyed the dissertation by my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills, where he only gave us a

snapshot—a snapshot because of our limited time—of the number of scandals that this government has been involved in, and the absolute abdication of their responsibility when it comes to properly managing the public purse. He talked about hundreds of millions. Well, the number is probably closer to a billion. "Hundreds of millions" just doesn't seem the same as "a billion," and you're talking about $1 billion in cancellation costs for the Oakville and Mississauga power plants—the one in Mississauga that they kept on building weeks, even months, after the Premier promised it would be stopped, at millions of dollars a day in construction costs. And he talks about jobs? There are no jobs going on at that plant now. It's a white elephant sitting there doing nothing.

Meanwhile, he's going to cut 60,000 jobs out of the horse racing industry because he thinks he has a good philosophical argument for doing so. But it is so disingenuous on the part of this government to frame it that way, when we know darn well that it is a revenue-sharing agreement between the horse racing industry and the province of Ontario, and while the horse racing industry has received $345 million annually, that's split among the track, the industry itself and also the municipalities that benefit—any municipality that has a track. I'd be anxious to hear from Jim Watson in Ottawa, who probably won't say a word about it because he's probably been muzzled or bought off by the government in some other way to keep quiet on this. But the reality is that his municipality is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw, Speaker.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): —knows better. You withdraw that one?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, I withdraw that one. Thank you, Speaker. I got ahead of myself. I got excited.

But we do know how these kinds of relationships work sometimes. It's sort of like the self-devouring, incestuous relationship that was going on at Ornge.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yeah. You know, this is just the mother of all scandals. We thought that eHealth—with eHealth we're talking about $1 billion of our taxpayers' money that was wasted, poured down the drain. How much could we have done in health care? You know these hospitals where they're talking about cancelling the capital projects? How many of those would be going ahead or not on the chopping block if they hadn't wasted $1 billion on their eHealth scandal?

But then I look at Ornge. And you know, Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General today, while he couldn't come out and say it directly, all but said that we need to go ahead with this select committee on Ornge, because he made it very clear that there were areas in this Ornge scandal that he cannot get to. The police are limited to investigating criminal activity; he's limited to looking at the financial stuff.

The minister today brings in a bill. We haven't seen the bill. She talks about whistle-blower protection. Well, I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, a select committee of this Legislature—it was voted for by this Legislature yesterday—will guarantee whistle-blower protection for those people who want to come forward and tell us more about this Ornge scandal, so that people across this province know—know—how unaccountable that organization was and how the Minister of Health went around blindfolded while all of this went on.

I just want—I hope I have time. This is just the chronology of one aspect of it, where they bought this building for $15 million, okay? Then they leased it back, paying significantly more than market rate rent to one of their subsidiaries. It just gets—I know it sounds crazy, but the sad part is it's true. So here's the chronology.

Ornge leases 34,000 square feet of the building to its operations and subsequently decides it needs more space. Ornge Issuer Trust, a financing vehicle used by Ornge, issues a $275-million bond. Part of the bond proceeds are used to buy 72,000 square feet of head office space for $15 million. Bare Trustee, a subsidiary of Ornge Issuer Trust, owns the property and leases it to Ornge.

A committee of the Ornge board begins to examine the reasonableness of a plan to create an international for-profit business venture to be called Ornge Global. Ornge's board authorizes the creation of the Ornge Global organizational structure. Ornge Global Management Inc. and Ornge Global GP Inc. are officially created. Ornge creates a subsidiary, Ornge Global Real Estate Inc. Ornge Global Holdings LP is officially created. Ornge issues a declaration of trust placing Ornge Global Real Estate Inc's single share of capital in trust with the newly created Ornge Global Management Inc. and giving it authority to make all decisions for Ornge Global Real Estate Inc.

Then in January of last year, Ornge creates a subsidiary, Ornge Real Estate Inc. The Ornge board, after receiving reports from its committee, gives final approval of all organizational changes and agreements involving Ornge Global, subject to informing the ministry of the details of its decision. The chair advised the ministry in writing of its new business ventures and its new organizational structure.

It goes on to say that they paid rent. They borrowed $25 million. Ornge Global Real Estate borrows $25 million by issuing mortgage bonds financed by a third party, and this is $9 million more than the $15-million purchase price of the property. The provincial debt increases by $24 million as a result of this. I haven't got time to cover it all, Speaker, but it is such a tangled web that there is no option for any reasonable person to conclude that this book is closed. Any reasonable person listening to the auditor—and he talked about the culture of intimidation at Ornge and how fearful people were about telling the truth. No reasonable person could possibly believe that this book can be closed without a select committee of this Legislature having the

opportunity to examine it in full and come back with its findings and its recommendations.

There are doors that the auditor cannot open. There are doors that the OPP cannot open. Their mandates don't allow for it. There is only one way for the people of Ontario to know what actually went on at Ornge, and that is a select committee.

The auditor went on to say that the minister had the authority to hold them accountable and failed to do so. A select committee and the resignation of the minister: Nothing less is acceptable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

There being no further debate, Mr. Milloy has moved second reading of Bill 46, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will say "aye."

All those against the motion will say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it. Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

SUPPLY ACT, 2012

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2012

Mr. Milloy, on behalf of Mr. Duncan, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act to authorize the expenditure of certain amounts for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012 / Projet de loi 46, Loi autorisant l'utilisation de certaines sommes pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2012.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those in favour will say "aye." Those opposed? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All in favour? Carried.

This House is adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1738.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 22 March 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 22 mars 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AGGREGATE RESOURCES ACT REVIEW

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Standing Committee on General Government review the Aggregate Resources Act and report to the House its observations and recommendations with respect to strengthening the act. In developing such recommendations, the committee's focus shall include, but not be limited to, the following areas: the act's consultation process; how siting, operations, and rehabilitation are addressed in the act; best practices and new developments in the industry; fees/royalties; and aggregate resource development and protection, including conservation/recycling.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy has moved government notice of motion number 21. Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE ACT (EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE CONGÉ FAMILIAL POUR LES AIDANTS NATURELS (MODIFICATION DES NORMES D'EMPLOI)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 21, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver leave / Projet de loi 30, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I am pleased to stand on behalf of the PC caucus with respect to this bill, Bill 30, the Family Caregiver Leave Act for workers. I have listened intently to the debate that has happened and occurred in this House on this issue—very intently. I think it's an important issue for when people have loved ones who are ill. I think the sentiment is that we should do everything in our power to help.

But one of the things that I had heard in the debate over the last little while had to do with respect to the fact that the government has created a bill, they proposed a bill, that is intended to provide some relief, but they actually want the official opposition, the PC caucus, to pick up the phone and call our federal cousins and effectively help them implement a bill that, for all intents and purposes, is flawed.

Now, I have to ask about the competence of a government that can not only ask us to pick up the phone on their behalf, but they can't even pick up the phone, dial 10 digits and call them themselves. I don't understand how it's possible for a government to not be able to dial 10 numbers on a telephone, pick up the phone and ask for themselves. I say that with particular reference, because over the last little while we heard this governing party across the aisle making reference to and picking fights with their federal cousins.

I kind of know why they don't want to pick up the phone. It's like, you know, Mr. Speaker, maybe when you asked a lady on your first date: You call them up, you were a little nervous about it; you might have had some fear, some anxiety, and you might have had that anxiety because of the fear that those people or your potential date, potential girlfriend, might say no. That's why there's some anxiety.

So what do you do? You ask someone else to ask that person for you, in the event that they might say yes; or if they say no, it might not feel as bad. It might not hurt as much because you heard the no indirectly, and you know that person is going to be somewhat gentle in letting you know that you've been denied the request of something very important.

So I think I actually figured out why they can't dial the 10 digits: It's either pure incompetence, an inability to look up 10 digits in the phone book, or it has to do with the fact that they have some anxiety because they know the answer is going to be no.

Why might that answer be no? I think we know the answer to that, too, Mr. Speaker. Because over the last eight years, since 2003, federal transfers to the province of Ontario have increased by about $8 billion—$8 billion. It's not some small amount where you'd expect that if I asked for a couple extra million or $100 million or whatever this is going to cost, I might say yes. It's $8 billion—billion. This is an astronomical figure: $8 billion, Mr. Speaker. And we know what $8 billion has actually bought in the province of Ontario. It's bought a $16-

billion deficit, going on $30 billion. So revenues have increased; transfers to the province of Ontario have increased. Ontario, for the first time since Confederation, has become a have-not province, a have-not province, and the Minister of the Environment knows. You know that we're finally getting equalization payments to the tune of billions upon billions of dollars.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

0910

Mr. Rob Leone: We are finally, finally successful in coming to Confederation's welfare payments. We're receiving welfare payments from Stephen Harper's government in Ottawa.

Interjection.

Mr. Rob Leone: It's not a handout.

That's why they're afraid to pick up that phone, because they know that if they ask for yet more money, the answer is going to be no. And that's the issue here, Mr. Speaker. They've come up with a policy that has some effect. It touches at the heartstrings of people right across the province of Ontario. I know we've all had loved ones we wish we could spend more time with in their final days to help them feel better, to help lessen the pain. So on the face of it, reading a title like the "family caregiver leave for workers act" kind of feels good. It feels great, actually. We're actually helping people do what they want, and yet what will help people actually do what they want is the money to leave work, to maintain a sense of income.

So in effect, Mr. Speaker, this policy is basically a smokescreen. It doesn't get to the heart of what I think the bill wants to do, because there's just no money for it. There's no money in Ottawa to spend here in the province of Ontario, more than they already have. And this government has sunk us in such a deep hole, $16 billion—Don Drummond says it's going to $30 billion. The size of our debt has almost doubled in the last eight years. There's just no money. And every time we see a new policy from that side of the House, we have to reach deeper and deeper in our pockets to actually make sure it happens.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Like for that new hospital in Cambridge?

Mr. Rob Leone: What about that hospital in Cambridge, Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: You must want it.

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, you know, you raise an interesting point, because it was your government and your party that actually made lots of promises of hospital expansion projects right across the province of Ontario to either retain or gain Liberal seats. And consistently what we've seen is a pattern of lack of accountability, of promises made and promises not kept. That's the story of your government over there, Minister. I'm proud to speak to that any time you want, so keep heckling if you wish, because that's the reality.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister of the Environment, come to order, please.

Mr. Rob Leone: It's a good thing you called the Minister of the Environment to order, Mr. Speaker, because he raises the important issue of the fact that promises are made and never kept. I actually would consider this bill part of that. You see that this bill is supposed to do these great things for people, but they actually want Ottawa to help them implement it. To me, that's not a promise made and a promise kept; that's a promise made and a hope that the other party and the other government in Ottawa actually keeps it. So that's a great problem with that, Mr. Speaker.

Let's talk about a few issues that might arise on this. Certainly there's a flaw in the implementation of such a bill that we've seen from almost every policy that's come on that side of the House, where you try to see what the need is, where the need exists; you create a policy; and then it falls far short of achieving its objective. That happened in the case of this bill, I think, because you can't ask a person to take some time off and put their livelihood on hold in order to accomplish what I think they want with this bill.

We've seen it with other things, like the Ontario tuition grant, which speaks to the fact that there are hundreds of thousands of students in the province of Ontario who are paying tuition, like every other student in the province of Ontario, and about two thirds of those students aren't even qualifying for the Ontario tuition grant on the basis of all the little rules, the qualifications, to actually be able to successfully receive what this is. It looks great: You get a nice hashtag, you put up a nice website and you tweet it. But it doesn't achieve the objectives they set out. In fact, it is a promise made and a promise not kept, something that we've seen over and over again.

We obviously have to talk about some of the effects of this bill on what we see in the greater and broader economy. This involves, I think, a lot of employment and labour law, of course, which is an interesting topic as well, because if anything, other than the fact that we've seen a multi-billion dollar deficit in the province of Ontario—a crisis that, if left unchecked, we're not far from becoming the next Greece, all right? If we compare that crisis with the other crisis which is relevant to this discussion—the jobs crisis, the employment crisis in the province of Ontario—we really can speak, I think, to the problems inherent in what we're doing.

So let's talk about that employment crisis. We have folks in our labour force who, each and every day, have a desire to work, have the skills to work, even have the experience to work, who simply can't find that work: almost 600,000 Ontarians—600,000 Ontarians—who cannot find work in the province of Ontario. In fact, our unemployment rate in the province of Ontario has been greater than the national average for more than five years—five years, Mr. Speaker. It's a job crisis, I think, of epic proportions.

We used to be the proud province, the economic engine of Confederation, a province that has, for generations, provided a wealth of employment. In fact, my parents—and I've spoken about this before—came to the

province of Ontario in the 1960s because they wanted to provide a better life for their kids and their grandkids. That's what drew people to the province of Ontario for generations. They came here because they could provide that better life for their kids and their grandkids. I think that we're losing that. And rather than addressing that core issue of having jobs that feed families—jobs of the future—we are talking about a bill here that does neither. It does not provide the kinds of employment opportunities that our young people desire. It doesn't provide the opportunities for families who have been struck with financial hardship because maybe their factory closed down or their office has moved and relocated or simply gone bankrupt.

We need to have some policies, concrete policies, to address those core concerns and to address the fact that we have a serious job crisis in the province of Ontario. Unless we're talking about that, unless we're spending 20 minutes—which I've been allotted today, and I thank this Legislature for giving me the opportunity to speak to this for 20 minutes. Unless we're spending time debating those issues—how we can jump-start our economy, how we can reignite private sector employment growth once again in the province of Ontario—I think we're doing a disservice to the people of this great province, to the people who elected us in this Legislature to do the work, to solve the pending problems that we face in our society.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about priorities, our priorities should be not only in fixing that fiscal crisis, but they should also be about fixing our jobs crisis, finding reasonable solutions to those competing problems—problems that, if we worked collectively together, I think we could actually solve. That's what I think the goal should be.

Rather than spending 20 minutes on those issues, maybe I can spend a bit more time talking about the real proposals for private sector job growth and for getting our fiscal situation back on track.

We've long advocated in this party, since we started in October, an unwavering commitment for a public sector wage freeze that would provide a couple of billion dollars in savings, until we get ourselves out of this fiscal situation, this crisis that was created, not by us in this party, but by them in that party—$2 billion.

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We're also talking about reforming the arbitration system to try and provide some relief to not only the provincial government, who has to pay wages, but to our municipal partners, to our colleges and universities, to our hospitals—which the Minister of the Environment has said recklessly they're trying to abandon some of the commitments that they already previously made.

These are some solutions that will provide a reasonable response to the fiscal situation, the fiscal crisis, that we find ourselves in in the province of Ontario.

We've also made commitments on the jobs side, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we have a commitment to retraining individuals who have lost their jobs and to get them in a position where they can find gainful employment. By 2021, we're going to have about a million people in the skilled trades—a million people in the skilled trades who—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I believe in the standing orders, 23(b)(i)—if you want to consult that section in the standing orders. It appears that the member from Cambridge may be drifting somewhat, so we want to get it right back on the bill, Mr. Speaker, if you please. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member from Cambridge, I would ask you to confine your remarks to the bill that's in front of us.

Mr. Rob Leone: Certainly, Mr. Speaker. I do take that point of order under good consideration from the member for Peterborough, particularly because when he speaks in this House, all he does is really talk about Peterborough and with little reference to whatever bill we're talking about. But, Mr. Speaker, I'll go back to the report—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Just representing my constituents.

Mr. Rob Leone: And certainly, as the member for Peterborough says that he represents his constituents, I do the same thing for mine, Mr. Speaker.

But I think this does speak to the bill. What I've talked about does speak to the bill, Mr. Speaker. It is in order to have the kind of social policy that we want, like the family caregiver—whatever it's called; Bill C34—if we are here to talk about those issues, I think we have to make sure that we have the fiscal capacity to enrich our social safety net. We just don't have that anymore, and that does speak to the bill, Mr. Speaker. It does speak to the bill, because that's exactly what we need. Without having that ability, bills like this—that look great on paper, that have nice titles, that touch at our heartstrings, that really make us feel that we are doing something positive for the people of Ontario—really become simply a smokescreen, really become an opportunity to have a nice title, to make us feel warm and fuzzy, but at the end of the day, don't really focus on what we're trying to achieve. That is, in essence, what I'd like to suggest on that point. I think that getting our fiscal house in order is very important, and I think that that's very true.

I want to sort of end on a very personal note, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that when I first read the title of the bill, it reminded me of last fall when my grandfather passed away, and it reminded me of that because I, like many of my family members—my cousins, my brother, my parents, my aunts and uncles, and my grandmother—we spent a lot of time in that hospital by his bedside, waiting for him to pass away. So I was very hopeful, Mr. Speaker, that although I had the opportunity to spend that time—and we took turns—I worried about the people in that hospital hallway that didn't have the time, where their parents or their grandparents or a sibling was about to pass away, and they just were essentially dying alone. I want to know how we can collectively work on a solution that enables those people, in their last few moments

on this earth, to actually talk about and spend that time and lessen the pain and comfort those who are about to pass on, Mr. Speaker.

I was very hopeful that we were going to see something in this bill that would allow them to get to that step. Unfortunately, I don't see that. Unfortunately, I disagree with the fact that they want Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition to pick up the phone rather than doing it themselves to enable that. On that basis, I have some serious reservations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'll be sharing my time with my colleague from London–Fanshawe.

It is really a privilege and an honour for me to speak on Bill 30, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, in respect—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Sorry, Michael, this is a two-minute hit.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I did say questions and comments, not further debate.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Then I will continue on with what I was going to say. I will just change it back. It's a rookie mistake.

I share some of the views with my colleague here. I understand some of the concerns that he has with the actual bill. It's a similar bill to something that the government of the day actually introduced a little while back, where it helps some but really doesn't address the core issue and does not help the mass. That is really something that we really need to get a hold of in this House and really need to put a real effort going forward to bringing the benefits to all Ontarians—not just some, but all of them.

It is so important that we seize these opportunities that we have, and this is another one of those opportunities. A little while ago, we had the opportunity, and we still have an opportunity, to help our seniors in our communities by providing them—all of them, not just some of them—with real benefits, real opportunity for them to help enhance their way of living.

This, again, is that opportunity that we have in front of us, where we need to implement the proper checks and balance in order to help all Ontarians—everybody: full-time, short-time, part-time, all employees. And we really need to make sure that this makes it easy for them, so that we have a definite role between "What is the employer expecting from the employee? What is the employee expecting from the employer?" so that they can go and address the compassion that they need for their family member. This is where we really need to go with this bill and we really need to take the opportunity to do it right.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and I'm glad to join the debate and comment on the family caregiver leave. I just want to remind people what we're talking about this morning, and I wanted to comment on something that the member from Cambridge spoke about.

He began his comments being rather flippant and, I would venture to guess, even insensitive to people who are struggling with this issue. But he ended on such a really telling comment with regard to his grandfather, and I wanted to offer my condolences. It's a very difficult issue when somebody you love is dying in hospital or struggling with a very serious illness. None of us know what will happen when that occasion happens, what kind of time we'll have, how we'll react.

Certainly, I want to remind people what we're talking about. It's about job protection. We've done a lot of consultation and we've talked with people like the Ontario Home Care Association, the Canadian Home Care Association, the Ontario Caregiver Coalition, the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, the Alzheimer Society of Ontario and the Canadian Cancer Society. These are organizations that approached us prior to the election, asking for the possibility of providing leave for those caregivers who are struggling with juggling family commitments, a job and all of the surrounding extraneous issues that tie up your hands when what you need most is time—time to be with the person that you love.

Certainly, the member from Cambridge made it painfully clear how much that struggle was within his own family. It happens across this province and I really would encourage members to provide constructive, helpful suggestions. We had it previously from the NDP side, offering some suggestions with regard to definitions. I appreciate that kind of constructive dialogue. I would encourage everyone in the House to think about how we can make the bill better. I encourage it, and I respect the interests of this debate to inform that legislation going further.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to comment on the speech by my colleague from Cambridge as well.

I want to touch on the comment of the Minister of Labour. She said, "What people need is time." Well, there's a saying that is much older than this Legislature, and it's "Time is money." There's not a nickel in this bill. There's not a nickel in this bill to help those people who are looking for that time off for a family person who is ill under the Family Caregiver Leave Act.

Speaker, without dollars attached to it, it's meaningless. In this day and age, people are struggling. Eight weeks off without pay is not something that people can look forward to in this day and age. Eight weeks off without pay? Some people don't even have eight weeks of savings. So when you think about that—

Mr. John O'Toole: They don't even have a job.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They don't have a job. Well, if they don't have a job, they're not going to get time off, but—you don't get time off from something you don't have; I understand that. But the reality is, eight weeks off without pay is not something that people can afford.

But do you know what this bill is all about? It's a deflection from the sad reality of how this government

has failed. This bill is designed to do one thing. They should have sat down with the federal government and said, "Is there something we can do with regard to family caregiver leave with respect to people who are ill?" No. They would rather bring out this bill. They're going to bring out this bill, and when this bill passes, as it most likely will, they will then go out on the hustings and blame Stephen Harper and the federal government because there's no federal money to pay for their promises. I mean, this is just so characteristic of the Dalton McGuinty government since it has been in office—

Mr. John O'Toole: Spend, spend, spend.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Spend, spend and hope somebody else is going to pick up the tab. It's time that they actually took responsibility.

I don't have time right now. I hope I have time to speak to this bill later, but let's talk about Ornge. You want to talk about abdication? Let's talk about Ornge.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member from London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning to everyone in the House.

I want to thank the member from Cambridge for his presentation today, my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin and the Minister of Labour for her comments with regard to some of the productive input that they've had on this bill from our side of the House.

If I recall, it was the member from Nickel Belt discussing the definition of the medical person who would actually be authorized to sign the certificate and authorize the condition, perhaps, of the patient who might need the family loved one to be looked after, determining whether it's a serious medical condition. That is very important because part of that process is going to be getting that certificate.

We need to clarify, as well, how that certificate will be obtained with regard to the financial issue. Will the employee be expected to pay for that certificate? And if so, we have to think about—the people who perhaps are going to use this eight-week leave are going to be people who are in precarious jobs. They may not have that extra $50 to pay for that certificate, and with that eight-week leave without pay, that could be a very big strain, that extra $50. So I would hope that someone who is in a precarious job, should they find themselves in that unfortunate and sad situation, is able to take a week or two, or whatever up to the eight weeks, if they're able to scrape by and make that financial sacrifice for that time. But we don't need to add to that if they are willing to try to get to that stage to help their family members and add to that other certificate cost.

So I would urge the government, when we're at committee, to really look at that as well and define that as well, where that would come from. If anything, I hope that there wouldn't be a cost.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: Can I get a response, Mr. Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Cambridge, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin my response by thanking the member for Algoma–Manitoulin, the Minister of Labour, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and the member for London–Fanshawe for their comments.

I want to thank the Minister of Labour first off for those condolences and warm wishes. I appreciate those comments and concerns.

But I want to address a remark that she made in terms of the beginning; I may have been a little bit insensitive. I think the picture that I was trying to draw is that this is an issue that I care about quite a great deal. What I find problematic—and maybe I can use the word "insensitive"—is that the people who are going to rely on such a policy aren't going to be able to benefit from it because there's simply not the money to do it.

I think the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke made the point quite clear that, during the next election, if this does not succeed or this does succeed and it doesn't get enacted, the blame's going to lie on Ottawa. This is a pattern we've seen over and over again.

So rather than being insensitive, what I'm trying to suggest is how we can be a little bit more constructive, how we can actually implement this bill so that people can have a direct benefit from the province of Ontario, and recognizing that does involve the expenditure of funds. If we were in a better financial position and fiscal position today, we'd have the funds available to produce a policy that I think would have some meaning to the people who are affected by the passing of a loved one, a close relative, a mother, a father, grandparents, brother or sister or very close friends. That is what I'm trying to get at in my remarks.

So rather than being insensitive, I hope those comments were considered to be constructive.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Further debate? The member for Etobicoke–Centre.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. I'm—

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: The people who are speaking next are the NDP.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Nobody stood.

Mr. John O'Toole: Nobody stood?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Nobody stood.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the member from Durham please—I recognize the member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise, and I know we'll all have an opportunity to share in the discussion on this particular bill. I'd like to raise a couple comments, first, probably from a personal perspective involving work that I had the privilege of participating in but also from a

broader perspective of why this bill is particularly important at this time within our aging community.

A lot has been said about the relationship with the federal government, and I must admit that I have a very good relationship with my federal member, and the discussions around how we've dealt with employment insurance, for example. The inconsistencies with which Ontarians are dealt with in comparison to other jurisdictions such as Alberta—he is very, very empathetic with those. I suspect it would be exactly the same because this bill was put in place, in fact, to respond to a federal bill that was put in place on compassionate leave to help us deal with some challenges that folks are facing.

Interestingly enough, I just spent an afternoon about a week or a week and a half ago with the CEO of a very large pharmaceutical company who has actually put this into place in his business practice already. He has recognized that there are challenges with the people who are working in business trying to struggle with and deal with the end of life care in particular or a catastrophic situation in their family. It's interesting: 40 cents of every dollar we spend in Ontario goes to the federal government, so I have no difficulty asking them to be a partner in helping us as we deal with some emerging and challenging issues, especially in our aging community. I think that they have a responsibility to work with us. You have to have lived on another planet not to realize that the challenges of this fiscal situation, regardless of what government you're involved with, are that we have to find new and innovative ways to deal with those challenges that face us.

Interjection.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'd like to speak about the challenge. People say this is up to eight weeks. It's not eight weeks necessarily—it could be or maybe two days. So let me draw on my personal experience and chat with you a little bit about the end-of-life palliative care that I've been involved in for over 20-some-odd years, first as a volunteer coming out of my church, so it gave me an opportunity to work directly with families.

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Some 93% of all the people who are at end of life want to die in their own home. They do not wish to die in a hospital. In order for that to happen, you need support services in place. You need to be able to provide respite to families who are caring for those loved ones. You need to be able to provide medical support, and that's what palliative care or a hospice would be able to do and actually does do right across this province. They're able to provide the kind of spiritual support, respite support, intellectual and physical and psychological support to the families as they're struggling with end-of-life care.

But what's most important as a volunteer when you go in and you're with the families is that you recognize that, at some point, that individual wants to be with that person as they are nearing the end of their life. So how do we provide a mechanism that allows that to happen? It may be up to eight weeks or in fact it may be a couple of days or it may be a few hours. The one thing about the human spirit is that we cannot definitively say when someone is going to die. What happens is that we give them a time frame and then they may or may not die within that time frame. That person who is there with that loved one needs to know that they can stay with them without any repercussions of leaving their job for a few days or a few weeks. That's exactly what this law is planning to do.

I think my colleagues across the way have identified a number of issues that can be discussed within committee and need to be addressed. I agree with you. For example, who determines the medical leave in terms of the payment? But I think the most important part is, how do we as a civil society deal with an aging population who are dealing with these catastrophic events in their life, such as death? And how do we help the families? If you want to look at the economic reality, a hospital bed costs $1,800 a day; to stay in a residential hospice is about $465. To stay at home is relatively less than that; it's just you're looking at the medical care at the end of life. Why wouldn't we put those supports in place to help folks deal with something that is so traumatic in their lives? Why wouldn't we provide them the choice? Because that's what it is: It's a choice. Nobody is saying they have to do it. But it gives them a choice of which to do.

When I listened to the CEO, he said that one of the things he discovered with his particular employees was that they were so stressed out over what was happening in their private lives that they weren't productive in their business lives. So he was prepared to give them that kind of support so that they could deal with that tragedy or the event that was occurring and then come back. He had a better employee for it, because they understood that he understood their need for compassion. He understood their need to be with someone at end of life. He understood that they needed to be able to have that relief that you do have when you ultimately say goodbye and you're not rushing from your business to do it; you're beside that person, holding their hand as they leave their life.

You know, we forget about this. I'll use my own example. I've been married 44 years. That's a long time, and my Bill is pretty important to me. I would like to think that if something happened to Bill that I would have the opportunity to be with him at the end, or vice versa, with no implication. I maybe have that option by virtue of what I do. But if I was in business and I was forced to take only my holidays and I had exhausted them, or there were no opportunities and that employer said, "It's either you leave or you're toast; your job is gone," and I need that job because I have children at home, then what recourse do I have? None. And the existing leaves do not supply the kind of support mechanisms that this law will actually give to those folks.

So to me it just makes a great deal of sense to be able to ask how we can help people at the time of need. It's interesting, when end of life occurs, sometimes you have to go to the hospital because of medical intervention issues. But even then, you want to be with that person 24-7. You don't want to be there all night and leave to try to

go to work the next day. You want to have the peace of mind that you're with that person, whether it's your child or whether it's your husband or your partner or your parent. And remember that today in our society, parents are torn between the aging parent and the younger children in their families. They have obligations as well. There are only 24 hours in a day.

You need the kind of support that allows you and gives you permission to do the things that are required in order to support that family. And you can't do everything. You do everything you can, but you cannot do everything. You need to be able to find the time, and this is what this bill gives you. It gives you up to eight weeks of relief from your business to be able to do that. People say, "Oh, well, you know, all the business will collapse, the world will go to hell in a handbasket," because some people are going to take end-of-life care.

I actually heard someone suggest yesterday, which was disconcerting, that if they had a bad cold, they'd take time off. Now, think this through. This is unpaid leave, so nobody is going to take it unless they need to take it. Nobody is going to take it unless it's at that time of life where there's medical evidence that is required for them to be with that individual. I think it's actually disrespectful to suggest that someone would just have a cold and take the time off. After all, people have to work, and I think that was identified here.

There was another suggestion to just pick up the phone and bring it to the feds. The federal government does have a responsibility. I mean, they put $1.2 billion into the tar sands, in the oil and gas industry in Alberta; certainly they can help out with compassionate care leave. Why not? All our tax dollars come together, so I think it's really important that we work together to find the solutions that are really important if we, in fact, are going to deal with the issues that are facing an aging society.

Go off the end of life and go into a situation where you are a working parent, two parents working, four children, and suddenly your son or your daughter gets leukemia or they break their leg in an incident or they're in a catastrophic collision in a traffic situation. Those parents need to be with that child. There's no question in my mind. Family comes first. Family must come first as part of a civil society.

We, as government, must support that family. That's the other part of civil society. We have a responsibility and an obligation to say to people, "What is it we can do to help you?" Whether they're people with different abilities, whether they're people who are going through extraordinary changes in their lives, whether they're people who are dealing with end-of-life or catastrophic situations, we have a responsibility just as human beings to help each other. As government, we have a broader responsibility, a fiduciary responsibility, that says, "What are the things we can put in place that are enabling these people to do the things that we believe in fundamentally as individuals?" That's this kind of policy. This piece of legislation actually says that we're going to help people deal with things in their lives that they have very little control over, and that we're going to give and provide for them the kinds of support mechanisms they need.

As I said, it's interesting, because it's really just based on what the federal government is doing. They've already recognized this in their compassionate care protection leave. It's exactly the same and all we're doing is complementing that.

Yes, there will be situations that I think will arise that will be difficult, but either you look at something as what is the art of the possible or you look at it as what you can't do. I tend to be someone who says, "What is it we can do? What is practical and reasonable?" I'm not suggesting that everything is possible; it's not. As I said earlier, we do everything we can; we can't do everything. What we can do is work together very collaboratively with one another to look at this bill and to say, "Where are the gaps? What is it we can do better? What have we missed?" That's the whole idea of going to committee, ultimately going out to consultation, putting in those amendments and finding the things that will make a difference for the people we ultimately want to serve.

I've spent over 20 years with end-of-life care and I can share with you how important this bill will be to those people who are impacted and affected by end of life, whether it's your grandparents and you want to spend some time with them—because today, in this global world, our children are not always with us; they are all over the world. Many of our new families to Canada do not have extended families. They don't have the people to come in, so they rely on hospice to support them at end of life. That's maybe when they have one or two.

But the other is that we also have an aging population. In my particular area, just in one portion of my riding, one small portion of the Mississauga Halton LHIN area, by 2013-14, the number of people over the age of 85 will grow by 71.2%. I call it a tsunami. This is a real challenge.

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Then we forget, as well, about people who have comorbidity issues. Now we're living with Alzheimer's and dementia, but we also could be living with Alzheimer's, dementia and cancer, so it's even more important.

Bless the folks who have been able to help our people with different abilities, disabilities, to live longer, but they too are getting comorbidity issues. We need to put in place the mechanisms and support systems for families to help them as they struggle with this challenge, regardless of whether it's a short-term—hopefully, it's always a short-term—or an end-of-life situation.

I actually believe everybody in this House feels this way. I can't see where they can't. You can put out all the economic reasons you want, but at the end of the day it's not about dollars, it's about people. It's about a standard of life that we all aspire to. It's about the care that we all want to give. It's about the support we believe in for one another. That's what this is about.

You can do the economic argument, and I can give you the dollars on the other side to say it's much cheaper

to support this, as that CEO of that pharmaceutical company did. It was much cheaper for him to be able to support this because he had a better employee that was more productive, once they had had that situation dealt with in their family. But that isn't why he did it. He didn't do it because it was economical for him. He did it because it was the right thing to do, to help and support his employees. He cared enough about the people that worked for him.

Well, I care enough about the people in Ontario to find ways and means to support them in any way that I possibly can, and I think this is a good example of what we can do. I really do. I know that there's been a lot of—well, there's not one nickel attached to this. We go on and on—again, it's the nickel. Sometimes it's not the nickel. Sometimes people are prepared to take those few days off and forgo the nickel in order to be with the person they love at end of life. Sometimes they need to hold the hand of that child in the hospital as they're struggling through an operation. They don't need the nickel. They're prepared to forego the few dollars that they would receive. It won't be easy, and I wish there were other opportunities. I will continue to work with my federal partners to find those opportunities.

But, really, when you think about it, that nickel wouldn't be my first—I wouldn't say, "Gee, I can't take eight weeks off—or two days, or four days or a week—because I'm not going to get paid for it." I'm going to say, "Thank you that I've got a job to go back to, and there's some job protection so that I can be with my child, my grandparent, my husband or whomever in a particular time."

I think the nickel argument is a poor argument; it rings hollow in my mind. It would be interesting to ask those people who are dealing with end-of-life crisis whether the nickel was that important to them or not. I would share with you what's far more important: that they have the opportunity to have that person die where they choose to—be it at home, a hospice or a hospital—with people around who support and love them, surrounded by those people that care for them and, also, with the dignity that is required, that all of us must support for end-of-life care. There's no question in my mind that that is part of who we are and what we need to be able to do.

I know there was also a discussion about picking up the phone and dialling. I used to say, "Pick up the phone. I'm very ready; just work with me." I would like to think that when I phone my federal member, he answers the phone—and actually he does answer the phone—and we do work together. It doesn't mean we always agree on every situation, but we do share the same constituency; we do share the same concerns. We may have different approaches on how to resolve them, but at least we work together to try to resolve those approaches.

It isn't a matter of them and us—not on this situation. There may be others, but not on this situation, because all of us have grandparents, all of us have had families, husbands, partners, children; all of us have been touched, one way or another, by the situation of end of life or a catastrophe.

I had an example where my son was very seriously injured, and my husband was still in Africa. Had I been a working mom, I would have needed some time to be able to spend with my child as he went through some very significant challenges at Sick Children's Hospital. That would be a relief for me to know that, at the end of it, I still had a job to go to and that some employer wasn't going to say to me, "Too bad, so sad." There will be those situations, possibly, where an employer might have done that. I'd like to think that they'd be more like the CEO of the pharmaceutical company that said, "I value my employees, and I really can and will make a difference in their lives by helping them out and recognizing the challenges in their communities and in their own personal lives."

So, Mr. Speaker, for me, it's a part of who we are. I think it's a little bit in the DNA, if you like, in the House that we all care, and we all want to be able to support one another and make a difference, and I think we have an opportunity to do so.

I think we also have an opportunity to listen to one another to make this bill even better. I think that's part of our obligations to each other, because nobody should be able to stand up and say, "I can't support supporting people who need some time," whether, as I said, it's two weeks, three days, four hours—who knows?—or up to eight weeks, so that they're not feeling threatened that they don't have a job to go to at the back of it.

One of the areas we didn't touch on, and hopefully, my colleague from the other side, from the NDP, will, is the distance issue. We forget that not everybody lives south of Highway 7 and that when someone has a parent, for example, who is in the north, they travel great distances to be with that individual. You don't want them travelling back and forth. You want them to be able to stay with that person and to be able to care for them. That's a whole other situation.

I used to look at that one particular riding in Kenora, and I called it geographically insane; it was so large. But I was just thinking—just think of the challenge of someone who has a parent who is ill, who would try to struggle, going to support a parent who is ill and then back to work the next day. I mean, it's virtually impossible, and not just the geography—add the weather. So, it makes so much sense.

My plea to my colleagues is, how do we work together to make this bill even better than it is? How do we help the people of Ontario at the time they have some greatest need, and how do we do it with the kind of compassion that I believe each of us has inside of us?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I just want to straighten it out. First of all, Tim Hudak and this side are in support of this intent. However, we would expect it will go to committee.

I have to clarify a number of things that the previous member—who was a minister—said, which are wrong. You cannot take single days off to take your mother, or

other person conflicted, to the hospital and then return to work the next day. You have to take them off in weekly blocks, which is the first error.

Right today, in law today, under the Employment Standards Act—I worked in personnel for 10 years. You should be familiar with the Employment Standards Act: today, pregnancy leave, parental leave, family medical leave, donor leave, personal emergency leave, declared emergency leave, revisited leave. This is an extension in the existing law under the Employment Standards Act, which is a federal component, and it's the family medical leave established in 2004, which provides up to six weeks of entitlement. Your bill establishes eight weeks. If you're trying to make the federal government pay for it, why don't you harmonize with the federal government?

You're trying to act like you're doing this magnificent, compassionate motherhood stuff, which we all agree with. Don't imply that we don't. The way they go about it, Mr. Speaker, is so ham-fisted, it's troubling. The real issue here is they've politicized—they promised this in an election, and they still haven't got it right.

It's the same as the Ornge ambulance event. They took a very good idea and ruined it. That's what they did. They took a very good idea on renewable energy and ruined it. Now people can't afford to pay the electricity; it's so expensive because of the commitments they've made for expensive renewable options.

This is simply a case where the leadership doesn't know what they're doing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank the member from Durham for a little bit of clarification on some of the contents of this bill. I awoke last night to the voice of the member for Durham on the legislative channel, who was clarifying—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I hope it was on television.

1000

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yeah, it was on television. He had stated that, potentially, this bill offers leave if a family's animal was sick, and then he clarified that, indeed, it didn't offer that type of protection. I mean, of course there are questions about the coverage of this bill—and he's chuckling because he knows he said that. Of course we all have questions. I think we're all in agreement of the intent, but it has implications in terms of employers' ability to let some people go, the ability of people to actually afford to take this leave.

One of the things that I think it focuses on and tries to do is mandate some morality with our Employment Standards Act; the fact that if one of your employees' family members is sick, you should be afforded some leave to go take care of them. I don't think anyone would disagree that that's important.

But there are other aspects within our Employment Standards Act in terms of wage theft, where employers actually aren't paying their workers for the work they do, that has completely left the focus of this government. They understand, they know it's out there, yet no remedy is found to ensure that workers who actually work on an hourly basis get paid the wage they're supposed to be paid. Should we not focus on that as well? I hope that the Minister of Labour has a plan to focus on that. Of course, it would ensure that folks who get into this scenario would at least have the money that they're due to be able to afford to take some leave.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I wanted to compliment the member for Etobicoke Centre for her thoughtful, instructive debate. It's not unusual for the member for Etobicoke Centre to do that. That's pretty typical of her. She provides a thoughtful, non-partisan view of most legislation in this House. She's always done that and I appreciate that she did that this morning again. I think she wants to reassure Ontarians that the one thing that they need most, which is time—that this legislation is designed to have that debate come forward and help us manage an issue that we all struggle with from time to time.

When you have a sick or an injured family member, this is a struggle that you have going forward, and I appreciate that she provided that perspective in the House this morning. I realize we've had some comments from the other side that have been not as constructive as they could be, but I appreciate that the member from Etobicoke Centre encouraged everyone to bring forward constructive suggestions, as did the member from Nickel Belt previously.

She spoke a little bit about the kinds of practical suggestions that I've been talking about. At the time, she spoke about the value of nurse practitioners and how we need to bring them forward. Those are the kinds of insights that help inform better decision-making when we talk about legislation and that's what I would encourage all members to do.

We want to give working Ontarians the one thing that they need. They need some time to care for sick or injured family members. They want time to be with their loved ones; it's a matter of compassion. It's the right thing to do for Ontario families and I would encourage the opposition to find constructive ways to amend the legislation so that we can do what we all have, I think, acknowledged this morning: Address an issue that we all struggle with when somebody in our family is ill or is diagnosed with something that is very serious. That affects everybody in the family; there's no one that remains untouched, whether you're a politician or not. We all are brothers, sisters or daughters, and we all have someone that we care about. This is about doing the right thing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to respond to the member from Etobicoke Centre. Obviously, we share the same kinds of views with regard to societal compassion and the opportunity to provide for people in those times of greatest need. But I think that, having said

that, we also have to look at some of the practical restrictions that this bill provides.

One of the things is that it strikes me on first glimpse that it's another example of the kind of gesture politics that this government prides itself on where certainly there's the impression of the kind of concern for each other that is expressed in the bill, but there's no money. The ability of people to be able to set aside no pay for up to eight weeks is something that is really, I think, quite unrealistic. So, as I say, while it gives all the right impressions—and, obviously, we have no quarrel with the intent of the bill.

Also, just for the sake of putting it on the record, no one has come to me, as their representative, to ask for the potential of eight unpaid weeks. What they have come to me and asked about is the fact that the government has made a commitment, through the Auditor General's pre-election report, to a significant decrease in funding the issues on long-term alternative care beds, on CCACs. These are also vehicles of compassion for all of us.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Etobicoke Centre: Response.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the minister and the members from Essex, Durham and York–Simcoe for their concerns and for their comments.

I mean, in essence, what we're saying is if you've got some good ideas, bring them forward and let's work together to find a better bill. But I don't think the intent of the bill should be changed. You can talk about the CCACs and those other challenges that are there, and they're going to continue to be there in an aging population. But what we're actually talking about here is helping people at end of life. I've only had 20 years in end-of-life care. It's restrictive, and I've dealt with individuals. But I can tell you that I have had people who say, "I wish I could have stayed with my grandpa. I wish I could have stayed with my child."

Right now, if my daughter were diagnosed with cancer, the law says that I could get up to 28 or 26 weeks if the doctor says she's going to die within that period of time. But if she doesn't, because it's that human spirit that we don't know—I can tell you of so many times when the doctor has said, "This is the end: next week, today," and it doesn't happen—then we have to find a mechanism that allows the people to be with their folks at end of life, and that's what this bill is all about.

If, in fact, the member from Durham is unhappy with the bill, I say don't vote for it. If it's so difficult, that's fine. But I would like to think that all of us, by working together, can find a solution if we want to, to be able to say we can make a difference in the lives of a lot of folks. That's sort of what this bill is proposing.

Is it perfect? Are there things to do? Can we do more? Absolutely. Should we? Of course we should. And I would like to think that, again, the responsibility of this House is to continue to challenge and to look to how we can work on behalf of the people of Ontario in a far better and more productive way than we have by debating this bill in a more pejorative way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm pleased to talk to Bill 30, an Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver leave.

I was very encouraged by some of the comments that the member from Etobicoke Centre had actually indicated, that the points that we've highlighted from the NDP are going to be considered and taken seriously and looked at when we go into committee to have those discussions in order to enhance this bill for it to be effective, in order to bring the changes that we need for all Ontarians.

She talked also about having a choice and giving that choice to the individual to take the leave. Under certain circumstances, that choice is easy—in a perfect world, where we all have great CEOs, where we all have great employers, where the relationship is fine and everything is doing great.

I'd also like to inform the Speaker that I will be splitting my time with the MPP from London–Fanshawe. Thank you very much for that, my friend from Essex.

It's great to have that relationship with your employer, but unfortunately, it's not the reality. I hear from friends across the way that they do have that relationship with their employers and that they've never heard of a denial ever happening. You always hear that the doors are open for employees to walk into their employer's office. "We have an open door policy. Come on in. Let's have that discussion." Well, I'm sorry, you know. Stop living in the bubble, because it's not the reality.

1010

Sometimes, yes, the door will be open and you'll walk in, but unfortunately, as soon as you walk out, the door slams behind you, and that's where the relationship between employer and employee starts deteriorating, and that's where the unease starts happening. That's where the issues for the relationship start breaking down, and the walls get built, the fences are there, and the mechanism, the relationship, is now gone and destroyed. It takes a very long time in order to build that trust once again. It takes a very long time for an individual to build that relationship up again, if that door remains open.

So we really need to make sure that we have those mechanisms in place, and that there is a clear explanation of what the role of the employer and employee are so that there is no discomfort when you're going through this process and you're asking for this leave.

I'm also happy, and we're open to the idea that—yes, there is a long distance between communities in northern Ontario. If I heard my member from across the way correctly, there might be a premium for long travel. Maybe that's something that we should discuss over in committee as well. That would also be nice to see. But in essence, this bill is a good bill. It is an essential bill. It's positive, but it just doesn't go far enough. It just doesn't go far enough, and we should be able to get it there.

Again, I was encouraged by the member's comments that we will be discussing this in committee. That's where

we need to bring this to—to committee—to get those discussions, to have a good, effective bill that will help all Ontarians. That's where we need to go with this.

Again I want to reiterate that there have to be proper checks and balances here so that we know what the roles of individuals are when they're asking for this leave, so that there is no discomfort and that the employer knows their rights and the employee knows his or hers as well.

There were some concerns with this bill that were raised in regard to how far does it go in regard to who gets the entitlement to the leave. I need to stress something from my particular constituents that I've heard for many, many years now, because I've been in—we've all been in the job of serving our communities. But I just want to highlight one particular point. Under subsection 4(2)8, it says, "Any individual prescribed as a family member for the purpose of this section." And above, there are seven definitions of individuals who are family members.

Well, in northern Ontario, where we don't have large communities, where my next-door neighbour just happens to be a quarter-mile down the road, and it turns out that she's not the spouse, she's not my stepbrother, my father; she's not my cousin, aunt, uncle: She's a woman who's on her own who needs care. I'm her neighbour. As far as I'm concerned, that's a family member to me. That is important, and that is not covered in this bill. She is part of my family. I am the only family that she has around her. Her children—her entire family is in southern Ontario. She's alone. She needs care as well, and she's being left out here. The constituents need the ability to care for her. Let's not forget about her because CCAC does not always get to those locations.

Another point that was raised by my colleague from London–Fanshawe is that when we're going to be asking for this leave to our doctors—and I believe our doctors and our nurse practitioners have that ability to define what the illness is, for us to take the time off, or the need to take the time off. However, there's always a fee attached to that. There's always a time that you have to wait to get to that doctor, because it's not always that easy. I'm sorry; in northern Ontario, sometimes it takes anywhere between three weeks to maybe four, five, six, seven weeks in order to get that appointment. That time will seethe and will create more friction because the employer is waiting for you to justify the time you need to be off.

Again I understand that in a perfect world we all have great CEOs, we all have great bosses, but get out of that bubble; it's not like that for everybody in this province.

Ça fait que je veux toucher un peu sur la nécessité de ce projet de loi. Est-ce qu'il est nécessaire? Absolument. On ne questionne pas qu'il est nécessaire, ce projet de loi-ci. Les communautés dans le nord de l'Ontario et à travers tout l'Ontario, oui, ils en ont besoin. C'est essentiel à leur communauté. C'est essentiel à leur vie. Et puis, tout le monde devrait avoir la chance de prendre le temps qui est nécessaire.

I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker; you look like you're going to rise. I'll give you the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for debate has expired.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House now stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's just keep it that happy. Introduction of guests.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the members of the Grain Farmers of Ontario, who hosted a great breakfast here this morning in the legislative dining room. The members in the gallery are the chair of the Grain Farmers, Henry Van Ankum; the CEO, Barry Senft; and board member and grain farmer from Kent county Mark Huston. I want to thank them for coming to Queen's Park today.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's my pleasure to introduce this morning, from the Niagara North Federation of Agriculture, the president, Albert Witteveen, as well as Ken Durham, Robert Bator, Torrie Warner, John Sikkens and Cathy Mous. Welcome.

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's my great pleasure to welcome to Queen's Park today a young man, Noah Alter, from Associated day school. He is job-shadowing me. He comes from the great riding of—no, not Thornhill—Eglinton–Lawrence.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome members of the South Central Federation of Agriculture who are joining us at the Legislature today. It's a big group, but there are a few of the local presidents that I would like to specifically welcome: Roy Shuker from Hamilton–Wentworth is here; Joe Schonberger from Niagara South; Vic Janulis from Norfolk; Nick Huitema from Haldimand; Steve Sickle from Brant; and Norm Richardson from Halton.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to have everyone in the Legislature give a warm welcome to the Perry family: Gillian and Don and their children Ashton, William, Meghan and Leanne. They're from the beautiful community of Midland. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to welcome Karen Philp, the executive director of the Canadian Patient Coalition. Welcome, Karen.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, this morning it gives me great pleasure to introduce to the Legislature my mother, Lena Fedeli, and my mother-in-law, Mrs. Erma Kelly.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: It's my pleasure to introduce six members of page Ammaar Jan's family: Arif Jan, Shahla Jan, Meryam Jan, Zara Jan, Nash Jan and Dawn Jan. Ammaar is our page captain today. Welcome.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm pleased to welcome today, from the Canadian Patient Coalition, Emily Wills, Harlon Davey and Joanna Valsamis.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome Megan Perry from Trinity–Spadina to Queen's Park today. Megan is the wife of Jason Kuzminski.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure to welcome an association with the Grain Farmers of Ontario, who are here today visiting us at Queen's Park. They offered a wonderful breakfast to members of the Legislature this morning, again reminding us that farmers continue to feed families and they continue to feed members of this Legislature. So I'm particularly happy to welcome them here today.

M^me^ France Gélinas: I'm glad to welcome members of the Canadian Patient Coalition. This is Cindy Anthony, the executive director of the Aplastic Anemia and Myelodysplasia Association of Canada; Wady Dyson—the last name is a little hard—Nierszhauss, who is a member of the board of directors of the Canadian Pain Coalition; and Karen Philp, who's the executive director of the Canadian Patient Coalition. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

I'm taking a chance here, but I want to personally welcome the member from Nipissing's mother for being here.

I want everyone to know and put them on notice that I'll be inviting all of your mothers and fathers and relatives.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, how did you know that?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You had that look on your face.

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. A key foundational principle of parliamentary government is ministerial responsibility. It is considered a foundational principle because it's one of the cornerstones of our parliamentary system of government. According to Bagehot, ministerial responsibility begins with parliamentary scrutiny. He argues that "If a minister does not know what is happening in his or her department, that person will be quickly exposed. Once exposed, it is the expectation of Parliament that the government find a replacement."

My question to the Premier is this: Can he tell us if he considers the doctrine of ministerial responsibility a foundational principle of our parliamentary system of government?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the best Minister of Health Ontario has ever had.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you. The member opposite raises a very important issue, and that issue is one of ministerial responsibility. It's very clear that the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order. All members, come to order.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker.

The issue of ministerial responsibility is, of course, a vital one, and I do want to acknowledge that the auditor did, in his report, say that we could have done a better job. I completely accept that. I agree with the auditor.

I also want to acknowledge that I consider my responsibility to be fixing problems in my ministry as I become aware of them, and that is exactly what I have done at—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: The minister's responsibility under the doctrine of ministerial responsibility is to resign. That is her responsibility. She has already proven that she is incapable of overseeing even the smallest portion of her multi-billion dollar ministry.

The question we have to ask is, if she couldn't exercise accountability and oversight of that small portion of her ministry called Ornge, how many other Ornges are there spread throughout that entire ministry? I want to ask the minister: Does she know that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I understand that the member opposite has a role in opposition to do exactly what he is doing. He is doing his job; I am doing my job.

I think it's important to listen to what the Auditor General had to say, because the Auditor General is an independent Auditor General, and what the Auditor General has written is, "The ministry has recently taken substantive action to address many of the issues raised in this report. Certain issues will take additional time to resolve in the most cost-effective manner...."

The Auditor General himself reports that we have taken substantive and concrete action. I take the Auditor General's word as—his is the advice that I take, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: The Auditor General's report is an indictment of this minister. That's what it is. The Auditor General clearly said that this minister failed to exercise her responsibility, and the very fact that this minister is refusing to take responsibility is sending a message to the thousands of public servants in this province, and especially under her ministry, that those at the top don't have to account and don't have to have consequences for their lack of responsibility. It is, I suggest to you, Minister, an insult to the oath of office that the minister took and is undermining the respect of this Parliament.

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I have taken significant action when it comes to Ornge, and that is action that has been recognized by the Auditor General. The Auditor General said, "When they replaced the board of

directors"—that was my action—"When they replaced the board of directors, we noticed a total—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —change at Ornge. If we were to ask for information, it was a tough time getting it prior to the new leadership. The pendulum has gone so far the other way that everyone at Ornge is falling over themselves to be co-operative and to provide information."

The actions that we have taken have been recognized by the Auditor General, if not the member opposite.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday's report by the Auditor General was a condemnation of all that has occurred under your watch. The Auditor General confirmed that you and your ministry officials ignored for three months his explosive draft report about an abuse of public dollars by those at Ornge and serious concerns about patient safety instead of taking decisive action. It confirms that this minister turned a blind eye and allowed the scandal to develop, fester and grow.

So I ask the minister, given the auditor's scathing report about your failure to uphold your responsibilities and duties of office, will you assume responsibility and finally, today, be held accountable and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the member opposite has raised an issue that I would like to address. The Auditor General did release a draft report to the ministry in September. I think most people in this House remember exactly what we were all doing in September. We were on the campaign trail. The ministry was operating in a caretaker role. It would have been completely inappropriate for the ministry to share that report with a person who was a candidate in the election, Speaker. I was not sworn in.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have now gotten to that point where I cannot hear the answer.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the member opposite knows as well as anyone in this House that when a writ is dropped, the responsibility of the minister changes, and that the ministry is in charge of the operations.

When I was reappointed as Minister of Health, Speaker, in late October—by then I was sworn in—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary question?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, my question is again for the minister. It's certainly disappointing, I'm sure, for the public to hear the minister state that she had absolutely no responsibility for the report that she was provided with by the Auditor General.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: She said she was on the campaign trail.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: She was too busy on the campaign trail.

I would say again to you, it is about a minister in this case who has failed to uphold the duties and responsibilities of her office; it is about a minister who is now ignoring the historic principle of ministerial responsibility and accountability.

So I ask you again today, will you do the honourable thing? Will you resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the Auditor General did make it very clear that we could have done a better job. I completely accept that observation by the Auditor General. But I do object to the opposition's characterization of my activities because when I was sworn in as health minister, in October, I was shortly thereafter briefed, and within weeks, we had a forensic audit team in at Ornge. We had people combing through all of the records at Ornge. That investigation has ultimately led to an OPP investigation.

Speaker, within weeks of becoming minister in October, I took decisive action. We have seen the results of that action, and the auditor—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The member from Durham will withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw that you would—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member does know better. The member will withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Speaker, again to the Minister of Health: It's beginning to look more and more like a cover-up. We know, according to the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

The member will withdraw.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I do so.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance will stop.

Final supplementary.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, we know that the minister and the Premier's office were informed last January about what was going on at Ornge. It's time to stop pretending that she did not know.

She has completely lost the confidence of the public. So I ask you again: Will you do the right thing? Will you assume ministerial responsibility and accountability, and resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the auditor was very clear in his report: that we have taken substantive action to address the issues that he identified at Ornge.

The Auditor General had serious issues with access to information at Ornge. We had problems as a ministry getting access to information. That is why we have taken the action we have. That is why we have a new performance agreement in effect right now. That is why I have introduced legislation to strengthen transparency and oversight to ensure this does not happen again.

I take my responsibility very seriously, Speaker, to the people of this province. What they want is for me to fix Ornge and get on with the other challenges—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, the Auditor General told us that he provided that draft report outlining the problems at Ornge to the ministry in September. Now we've just confirmed with the clerks' table that the cabinet stays in effect, charged with all of their responsibilities, during an election campaign.

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: So my question, Speaker, is to this minister: Why were the concerns—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will allow the member to ask her question.

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. My question is, why were the concerns that were raised in that draft report dismissed and not addressed by the minister?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the action that we have taken, in quite short order, speaks for itself. We have completely new leadership, a new CEO and a strong new board. We have a new performance agreement in place. We have introduced legislation that will tremendously increase transparency and patient safety. We have taken decisive steps. The Auditor General acknowledges that success and it's time for me to continue on with my other responsibilities—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it's very, very clear that this minister had a heck of a lot of information available to her and did nothing about it for far too long, yet she is constantly claiming that she's as shocked as anyone at the mess at Ornge. But she's been acting shocked for over a year. In November 2010, she told a committee on estimates, "We will do the work required to get answers to the questions you've raised about Ornge." That was in 2010, Speaker. What exactly did the minister do for that year? And what did she do since September, when the draft report confirmed the concerns that had been being raised for over a year? Why does she think she should keep her job?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I do know, as everyone recognizes, that it's rather heated. I will tell you that I've been hearing some words being used that are unparliamentary that I cannot assign to individuals. That is not the reason why one would do that. All members are supposed to hold themselves to that high standard, and I ask that it be done.

As for points of order, any point of order during question period is not the convention and will be heard after question period. As for us—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Bring it down. And I don't need a comment in the middle of my sentence.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the Auditor General is a highly respected officer of this Legislature. I think all of us are united in our respect for the Auditor General. The Auditor General has done a thorough audit of Ornge. He released that audit yesterday. In his report and in his press conference, he acknowledged that we have made significant, substantive, concrete changes at Ornge that go a long way to addressing the concerns. I have introduced legislation in this House. I hope that all members of this Legislature support that legislation to strengthen Ornge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Auditor General described a scheme whereby Ornge used government-backed debt to purchase a building and then leased it back to themselves for a healthy profit. This scheme was described in a letter sent to the minister in January 2011, Speaker—well over a year ago. The auditor said that that scheme should have raised a red flag. Why did the minister ignore that flag, and why does she still think she should be keeping her job?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I have said, the actions that we have taken to strengthen oversight at Ornge have met with the commendation of the Auditor General. My responsibility is to fix problems as I become aware of them. My responsibility also is to lead the transformation of our health care system that is essential for the protection of universal health care in this province.

I have released an action plan; I am now implementing that action plan. Earlier this week, I introduced a complete reform of how we fund our hospitals. That is the important work that we are doing as we move forward.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. The Auditor General pointed to a various number of signs that there were serious, serious problems at

Ornge. A number of signals were there—serious waste, serious risk to patients. Time and again, this minister ignored the red flags, which, the auditor said, "should have been questioned much earlier." Why did the minister ignore all of this and why, once again, I ask, does she think that she should be keeping her job?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I respect the work of the Auditor General. I accept his findings, Speaker. I take full responsibility for any actions I may have taken that contributed to this. But I can tell you that I moved quickly when I became aware of the problems at Ornge.

We have entirely new leadership; we have a new performance agreement; we've called in the forensic audit team; the OPP has been involved. These are strong and decisive actions, and I have yet to hear from the opposition what more they think I should be doing to fix the problems at Ornge. They are playing a political game; I understand that. The partisanship is evident in this House, Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We've only seen the tip of the iceberg at Ornge, but it should be enough to sink this minister once and for all. For over a year the minister said that she was concerned. Then she spent a year approving shady business deals, property flips and hidden salaries that belong more in a gangster movie than they belong in our health care system. For more than a year she ignored the warning signs—warning after warning after warning—even about patient risk. Why does she think she should still be the Minister of Health for the province of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The reason I think that I should continue on as health minister, Speaker, is because I have addressed the issues at Ornge. But that is only part of my responsibility. A larger part of my responsibility is to manage a $47.1-billion budget. But more importantly, it is a health care system that people rely on. When a loved one gets sick, you need the health care system to be there for you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would ask: If the minister can't manage a $135-million ambulance scheme, how can she handle a $47-billion Ministry of Health?

Speaker, the most frustrating and anxiety-producing issue for me is that this minister knows it is an important time for our health care system in this province. Patients are very worried that the system will not be there when they need it. We need to make some smart changes if we're going to get ready for the future. This minister has lost all credibility to do this, to manage this change because of the failures at Ornge. So, considering that she has lost all her credibility, will she finally do the right thing and actually resign?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite has identified exactly the most urgent issue in our health care system today, Speaker. It is: How are we going to drive the change in our health care system that we must do if we are going to be able to protect universal health care? That is why I released the action plan in January. It is all about getting best value for the dollars we spend in health care; it's about focusing more on prevention and wellness; it's about faster access to stronger primary care; and it's about making sure that people in this province get access to the right care in the right place at the right time for the right price. It is my total focus to transform the health care system—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This House will take a 10-minute recess.

The House recessed from 1100 to 1111.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is to the Minister of Health. It was rather shocking to hear the minister say that the campaign—election—got in the way of her doing her job and assuming her responsibilities as Minister of Health. She confessed in here that she wasn't able to provide the oversight to Ornge in response to the auditor's report. I would remind the minister that, according to the Executive Council Act, you do hold office at the pleasure of the Lieutenant Governor, even during a writ.

Will you now acknowledge you are not aware of your responsibilities, be held accountable and resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you. Minister of the Environment, come to order.

Minister of Health?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker.

The member opposite knows full well that when the House is dissolved, when we are in that interim period between the writ dropping and the new cabinet being sworn in, there are limitations on the activities of ministers.

I can absolutely tell you that when I was sworn in as minister in October, after the election, I was made aware of the issues that were examined by the auditor and I became aware that the auditor was having trouble getting information from the people at Ornge, so I called the Auditor General and I asked him about that. I told him that I would do what I could to help get the information he was looking for—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Well, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister: The minister is still the minister during the election writ period. The minister is still responsible, the minister is still accountable, and it is very disappointing to stand in this House today and for her to acknowledge that she was not able to assume that basic responsibility because she was too busy campaigning.

I ask you, Minister, do the honourable thing, acknowledge you failed in your responsibilities and resign.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Auditor General has acknowledged the substantive action that we have taken to change the leadership, to change the protocols, the transparency and the oversight at Ornge. The auditor specifically says that the ministry has taken substantive action to address many of the issues raised in this report. Certain issues will take additional time to resolve in the most cost-effective manner, Speaker.

The Auditor General himself acknowledges what we have done to address the issues that have been raised. I can tell you that I fully accept the auditor's report. It is unacceptable what transpired, and that is why we are taking the actions that we are taking. We have a new, stronger performance agreement that is now already in effect; we have new—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, the Auditor General drew particular attention to the millions of dollars of fees paid to one law firm. Of course we know now that this is the law firm of one Alfred Apps, the former president of the Liberal Party of Canada. Yesterday, the auditor described how those very lawyers stonewalled his investigations, a scheme created by a Liberal government that was paying millions in legal fees to the—of the Liberal Party of Canada and in order to keep Ontarians in the dark on this very scheme.

Mr. Speaker, it's clear that in order to get to the bottom of the scandal that happened at Ornge, we have to start at the top, and the top starts with you, Minister. Will you submit your resignation today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I was very pleased yesterday to introduce legislation on this very issue. We have introduced legislation that amends the Ambulance Act to provide much stronger oversight at Ornge, a much more transparent operation. This reinforces changes already in effect through the new and amended performance agreement. Speaker, we will be bringing in quality improvement mechanisms at—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland will come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —Ornge, just like we have done in our hospitals, to ensure that we are measuring and improving quality of care. There will be a patient advocate that will ensure that patients' voices are heard. We will continue to improve the quality of care at Ornge and improve the fiscal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: These weren't just warning signs; they were warning billboards and flashing lights begging for attention, yet a detailed January 2011 memo sent to the minister's office discussing the web of for-profit companies at Ornge was ignored. Countless whistle-blowers were disregarded, and a draft auditor's report discussing threats to patient safety given to the ministry in September was completely dismissed.

When did this minister start to care? When it showed up on the 6 o'clock news. It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that the majority of this House has lost complete confidence in this minister and the ministry, and of course the members of this province have lost confidence in the minister. Will you do the honourable thing, Madam Minister, and submit your resignation today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, it sounds to me like the member opposite will be supporting the new legislation that I have introduced because it addresses some of the issues that he has raised in that question. The new legislation does protect whistle-blowers. The new legislation allows the minister to appoint a supervisor to Ornge. It is a power that we have in our hospitals. It is one that is exercised only in very unusual circumstances, but I can tell you, had I had the power to appoint a supervisor at Ornge, I would have exercised that power. The new legislation will give us the oversight, the transparency and the ability to act.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, it would be helpful if you did not heckle while your member is answering.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And any other comments that are made while the Speaker is standing.

Ten seconds.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The new legislation, I think, is worthy of very careful consideration by all members of this Legislature.

1120

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, my question this morning is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, the feed-in tariff program has been a focal point of Ontario's clean energy economy. Ontario's investments in clean energy are creating jobs and cleaning up the air we breathe, ensuring that our children and grandchildren have a bright and healthy future. In addition, our clean energy economy has brought forward over $27 billion in private sector investment and created over 20,000 jobs.

Minister, I know that with these uncertain economic times, families are concerned that the FIT program will not be sustainable. In my riding, my constituents are concerned that the gains we have made will be erased. Minister, what is being done to ensure that Ontario's FIT

program remains strong and stable in these uncertain economic times?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I thank the member from Peterborough for the question. We did make a commitment to clean up the air, to bring on clean energy and to develop a strong, stable, clean energy economy here in the province of Ontario. The member from Peterborough has correctly outlined the progress we've made. Today I spoke to our clean energy strategy by speaking to the review we've conducted over the past couple of years, a review which will make that sure we can continue to build projects. We've streamlined the approvals. We've listened to communities, to farm organizations and to others. We're going to prioritize projects which have broad-based support. We're going to be able to build them faster and continue to strengthen our clean energy economy in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Minister, for that comprehensive answer. I know that my constituents in the Peterborough riding will be pleased to hear that the release of Ontario's feed-in tariff review will have a positive impact on Ontario's clean energy economy, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the program.

Minister, Ontario's clean energy economy has attracted over 30 manufacturers to produce clean energy technology in Ontario. As a result, Ontario's clean energy economy now employs over 20,000 people. It's not dirty money at all, Mr. Speaker. Minister, these jobs are important to Ontario's economic future.

Minister, it's important for the FIT two-year review to ensure that Ontario's clean energy economy continues to thrive, prosper and create jobs. Can you please share with this House what is being done to ensure that the long-term success of these jobs in the clean energy economy is protected?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member from Peterborough is right. Families and businesses are looking to the future. They want to know where the jobs for the future come.

You know, I was at Ryerson University this morning and speaking with some undergraduate and graduate students, and it's amazing, the projects that they've not only been working on, but they're working with private sector and energy partners to commercialize that research. That's the future. Over the next decade, the annual investment in clean energy is going to double from about $200 billion to $400 billion. Our clean energy strategy will make sure that with that strong energy economy here in Ontario, Ontario families and Ontario businesses will be able to benefit from the jobs as we sell our products and innovation around the world.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, clearly this side of the House believes in ministerial responsibility, and clearly at this point, you do not. When I was Minister of Health, I stood down—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: —from my ministerial responsibilities. I resigned on a matter far, far, far less serious than this Ornge scandal; in fact, quite a trivial matter now. And we had a couple of other ministers who did the same on rather minor matters. We did so because we believed the parliamentary doctrine of ministerial responsibility is fundamental to our system of democratic government in this province. It is the glue that holds you accountable. It's the glue that holds the system together.

When we have high and mighty cabinets and high and mighty Premiers, the only thing that the electorate can ask is that a minister step down and be accountable for the actions of her department, and in this case, for her own actions. Minister, will you do that?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. I can assure all members of this House that I take my responsibility as minister extremely seriously, and I do take my responsibility to the entire health sector extremely seriously.

We are in a time of transformation in health care. We're having to make some tough decisions about how we're going to protect universal health care and at the same time continue to improve the quality of care.

I think that the people of this province expect me to exercise my responsibilities as minister to ensure that they and their loved ones get access to the care that they need—to excellent care—in a timely manner, in a cost-effective way. That is my focus as minister.

I have absolutely addressed issues at Ornge. We are continuing to do that work. But I will not lose sight of my responsibility to the entire House—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Minister, you have lost sight of your responsibilities. You've lost sight of why you're here. You've lost sight of any accountability to the people of Ontario. You've lost sight of the providers in the health care system, the staff at Ornge, the pilots. You've lost sight of our democratic system.

You're in danger of thumbing your nose at 500 years of parliamentary democracy by refusing to step down. What makes you, your cabinet and your Premier so superior, so high and mighty, that you can thumb your nose at 500 years of tradition in this province, in this parliamentary system? People have died for this system. They've gone to war for this system. You thumb your nose at them as if you're not accountable to them. Resign today. Do the honourable thing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the Auditor General released his report yesterday. It is a report that I've read carefully—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I was pleased to see, Speaker, that while—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Complete your answer.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the Auditor General did, as he does, offer some very constructive advice on what we need to do to remedy problems at Ornge.

He also acknowledged that we have taken concrete, substantive steps to address issues that were raised in the report. I'm very happy to tell you that we will be acting on each and every one of the recommendations in the Auditor General's report. I think that is what the people of this province expect me to do, and that is what I intend to do.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^me^ France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

The Auditor General's report on Ornge paints a disturbing and shocking picture of the Ministry of Health failing to protect patient safety. What I'm hearing this morning disturbed me to the core. How can it be that the minister chose to campaign for her seat rather than protect patient safety at Ornge? How can she say this to this House? She has to resign. Will she agree?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Health.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thought the 10 minutes would have been enough.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. The member opposite has raised issues about patient safety. I want to assure the public and the members of this House that patient safety is the number one issue at Ornge, Speaker. When we put in place a new board, I was very clear with them that the number one priority was to look very closely at patient safety protocols, how they are measuring patient safety and how they are reporting issues related to patient safety.

1130

I can tell you, Speaker, that I have visited Ornge bases. I have spoken to those front-line paramedics who were very pleased to show me the changes that had already been made as a result of the new leadership as it pertains to patient safety.

There is no question that patient safety is the number one priority of the new board. I am delighted that Dr. Barry McLellan, the CEO of Sunnybrook Hospital, is leading that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^me^ France Gélinas: What I'm hearing doesn't make sense. We have an Auditor General's report that is delivered to the Ministry of Health. The Auditor General's report clearly states—it's in the paper—serious patient safety issues. We hear on one hand that patient safety is number one. Why was there no action? She was the Minister of Health. She had the responsibility in September, and nothing happened till after it hit the media.

This lack of action put patient safety at risk. She has to go, Mr. Speaker. She has to resign.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Auditor General specifically referred to what he called a sea change at Ornge when new leadership was put in place—what the Auditor General noted.

Now, the members opposite may have their own opinions. I'm listening very carefully to what the Auditor General has to say. The Auditor General said, "When they replaced the board of directors, we noticed a total sea change at Ornge. If we were to ask for information, it was a tough time," getting information. But the pendulum has swung "so far the other way that everyone at Ornge is falling over themselves to be co-operative...."

It is a new era at Ornge. Patient safety is the number one consideration, and that's what should be, Speaker.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, today is World Water Day. World Water Day draws attention to one of our most valuable resources: clean water.

Clean water is crucial to our well-being. Conserving water supplies and protecting our water quality is essential to ensuring the health of our families, our communities and our economy. Ongoing research, testing and evaluation of the current drinking water system throughout the province are crucial to the improvement of our current water technologies.

Speaker, through you, would the Minister of the Environment speak to some of the initiatives under way that continue to support excellence in the water sector through training and education?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I can tell the member and the House that, through the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act, a key part of our Open Ontario plan, we are driving innovation, creating economic opportunities and promoting water conservation.

Innovative Ontario companies are already leading the way, employing 22,000 people in the clean water sector. We want to help foster new and innovative water technologies to encourage people to use water more efficiently. In doing so, we can strengthen our economy by helping industry tap into the $400-billion global water technology market while protecting our vital water services.

The 2011 Ontario budget outlined the water strategy and announced funding of $30 million over three years for community demonstration programs and municipal water sustainability planning and to support education and public awareness of water conservation.

As stated during the recent throne speech, it is our government's goal to become the continent's water

innovation leader by 2015 and work with environmental experts and community groups to develop and introduce a Great Lakes protection act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Water technology also plays a fundamental role when it comes to the types of everyday products we purchase for our households. Families want to make green choices when it comes to buying products, especially products that use water.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of the Environment, can he explain to the House how Ontario is helping families not only conserve water but also save money?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Excellent question. Our government is helping families conserve water and save money through the labelling of water-efficient household products that they can buy. The new WaterSense label identifies household products, such as faucets, shower heads and toilets, that use 20% less water. Using less water protects Ontario's natural resources—that reduces demand on water heaters so people save money on their energy bills.

Under the program, Ontario manufacturers can now get water-efficient products certified and labelled "water efficient." Water-efficiency labelling builds on Ontario's expertise in clean water technology and makes the province a leader in water innovation to help address global water challenges.

We all want to do our part for the environment and make green choices when purchasing products. This new labelling system ends up doing just that.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Minister of Health. Earlier in question period, the minister seemed rather confused about her obligations under the Executive Council Act. You hold office at the pleasure of the Lieutenant Governor even during a writ.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, come to order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The minister stated earlier today to this House that she wasn't responsible as health minister during the writ.

On September 22, the London Free Press covered a story that starts with this: "Dropping a home turf election bombshell, Ontario Health Minister Deb Matthews revealed Wednesday the Liberals will raze London's South Street Hospital."

Let me quote from the minister, "'It's great news,'" said Matthews to the London Free Press. "'I'm pleased as the health minister and as the MPP ... I've been able to give it the attention it deserves.'"

She couldn't give attention to Ornge because she was making an election announcement in her own riding to benefit her. Who should we believe? The minister on September 22 or the minister of today—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Please be seated. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm reminded of former Speaker Peters as he urged us to look at the carvings in this Legislature—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland is now warned, and only once.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —to understand our responsibilities. The opposition is the hawk, I believe, to keep us accountable; government is the owl to keep wise.

I understand the partisan nature of today's question period. I understand that the opposition has a job to do, and they are doing that job.

I also understand what my responsibility is, and my responsibility is to ensure that our health care system is strong, so that the people who need health care get access to the care they need, when they need it, as close to home as possible.

I have addressed issues at Ornge. There is more to do, and we are doing that. Part of that is the legislation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, she's caught in her own web of deceit. She is now a minister of convenience.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The members on the government side will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the opposition.

The member will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn, Speaker.

This speaks to the minister's credibility in cabinet. She was spoon-fed a 30-page briefing about Ornge in September. It raised alarm bells to everyone who listened, but her. Even the Auditor General said she knew about the problems in Ornge when she was making campaign announcements in her own riding. She did nothing.

She is incompetent. She has lost the respect and the confidence of her ministry. She's lost the respect and confidence of this House and, more importantly, she's lost the respect and confidence of the people of Ontario. She needs to resign.

Interjections.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

I will acknowledge that that's the best part of this so far: You've been able to comply to that. Say it twice, you're down. I thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the auditor's report, of course, we take extremely seriously. As we do with every Auditor General's report that comes, we learn from what the Auditor General has found. That is

absolutely true of the report that was released yesterday. The Auditor General, as I have said, acknowledges that we have already taken substantive, concrete action to address issues at Ornge.

The auditor also raises some serious concerns about the former leadership. We also agree with that finding; we faced the very same challenges. Former leadership at Ornge hindered the Auditor General in obtaining the information he needed to fulfil his duties.

The changes at Ornge open up that process—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Health. It's a very sad day for Ontario, really, and there's nothing funny about this concern that we're addressing.

The minister has indicated that she wasn't on top of her file during the campaign because, again, the campaign came first. Not only was she making announcements in her own hometown of London but, quite frankly, she was also making announcements as Minister of Health in downtown Toronto—at Toronto Sick Kids, no less.

On September 18: "Sick Kids is the place where they discovered the cystic fibrosis gene, and it's where they invented Pablum," said the Minister of Health. "Supporting the Research and Learning Tower and bringing together these talented researchers under one roof is ... where discovery happens."

Well, we're discovering, Mr. Speaker, what's happening at Ornge. We're asking the minister now, once and for all—she didn't take responsibility. Will she take responsibility? Will she resign?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have taken full responsibility and I have made significant changes at Ornge. We have a completely new board in place. We have a new CEO in place. We have a new performance agreement. I have introduced new legislation. I sent in a forensic audit team. The forensic audit findings led to my ministry referring this issue to the Ontario Provincial Police. The Auditor General himself acknowledges the sea change in leadership at Ornge, and so do the front-line paramedics, the pilots and the front-line staff that I have met with.

Things have changed at Ornge. I take my full share of responsibility for the findings in the Auditor General report and I am acting on every single one of those recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Actually, looking ahead, the reality is, still, Ornge will be exempted from freedom-of-information rules, Ornge will still let executives line their pockets with limited health care dollars, and Ornge will not be able to be called before the government agencies committee. So nothing's going to change, Mr. Speaker.

Absolutely nothing is going to change under this minister and with her ministry. She hasn't taken responsibility, she's not going to take responsibility. Will she at least do the honourable thing and resign and let the Ministry of Health get on with their work?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite might think that this legislation doesn't change anything, but she's completely wrong. I would urge her to read the legislation, to understand that the changes are significant and real, and will make a tangible difference to Ornge people. The people who rely on Ornge to get the care when they need it expect us to do our job. That is why I have brought in this legislation that will give us significantly more oversight.

One of the changes in legislation is that under the former performance agreement, we could not change that performance agreement unilaterally. Under the new legislation, we will be able to unilaterally change the condition under which we relate to Ornge. It will allow us to send in a supervisor. That's a significant change and a power I wish I had—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

New question.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, in 2005, our government, together with both opposition parties, passed the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, or the AODA. I'm very proud of the act and the positive changes that it has helped bring to Ontario to make our province more inclusive for everyone, regardless of their abilities.

The customer service standard came into effect for Ontario businesses on January 1 of this year. Minister, can you outline what this standard means for businesses and consumers?

Hon. John Milloy: As I've often said, I think all members in this House, on all sides, should be very proud of the AODA, which was passed in 2005 and outlined a series of reforms that we'd bring to make Ontario fully accessible by 2025.

As the member mentioned in her question, the customer service standard has come fully into effect on January 1 of this year. What it means is that those businesses who deal with the general public—restaurants, stores and businesses of that nature—have been asked to come forward and develop a standard to deal with individuals with disabilities.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this is about changing a culture and a mindset. It's about looking at how businesses, restaurants and other places operate, making sure that those with disabilities can be accommodated. It may be as simple as rearranging the stores, making sure staff have training on how to deal with people with individual disabilities, or—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, Minister, for that response. From where I was before I was elected, I know how positive these changes are on our communities and for all our constituents that require some of these changes. I'm happy to hear that businesses are complying, because I know, at the time of the act, there was some question with respect to what the requirements were going to be.

Although bringing in the legislation was unquestionably the right thing to do for Ontario, what other impacts has the act had on Ontario? Through you, Speaker, to the minister: What are some of the economic benefits of providing accessible services?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Stop the clock. Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the members to come to order. Start the clock.

Minister.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think people recognize that following the AODA, there's obviously a good in terms of corporate responsibility, but it's also good in terms of the bottom line. There have been numerous studies that have been done, one by the University of Toronto, for example, which has shown that in terms of both tourism and retail, there's a potential for billions of dollars in additional business in the sense of making your place of business accessible to people with disabilities.

In terms of tourism—people coming to Ontario, as well as people here—there is a huge untapped consumer base which is in the best interests—as I say, the enlightened self-interest—of businesses—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

MEMBER FOR YORK CENTRE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On a note for our guests that are here: When we can indicate to you, when we do come together as a group to celebrate one of our own—I'm sure the House will join me in offering Monte Kwinter a happy birthday. He's 81 years old. If I—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, stop heckling. If I have my information correct, it is two years shy of an Ontario history record in the House.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order for Mr. Kwinter.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I hate to correct you, but on January 26, 2013, I will be the oldest member ever to have served in the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On this occasion, the Speaker does stand corrected. But thank you and happy birthday.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce, in the members' east gallery, a name that many people here will recognize. From the city of Toronto, I'd like members to recognize Sarah Thomson, a former mayoralty candidate and a former Liberal candidate in the riding of Trinity–Spadina.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to the recent news that the government is backtracking on its hospital expansion projects that they promised leading up to the 2011 general election. Time and again, we've seen promises for hospital infrastructure made before an election and quickly abandoned afterwards. As hospitals are the most important provincial institution in many communities, it is disappointing that they are at risk due to the government's constant bad spending habits on priorities that do not align with the people of the province of Ontario.

I have always been concerned that the government was going to break their promises regarding these showy announcements. This is why, four months ago, I introduced a private member's resolution to hold the government accountable by having them table a set of detailed plans for hospital expansion projects. The government refused to produce these documents, and it is clear that the reason the government didn't respond to my motion and table these details surrounding the hospital expansion projects is because they didn't want to table their back-of-a-napkin seat-saver plans.

It is clear that this government knew full well that they wouldn't follow through with the hospital expansion projects but pushed ahead with the announcements anyway. The government needs to come clean with Ontarians. They need to tell them what hospitals will be cut and table the detailed plans that the members of the governing party said that they would table. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: On March 25, members of the Greek community from around the world celebrate Greece's National Day of Independence. March 25 is observed both as a national and religious day of celebration for Greeks. It is a national holiday commemorating Greece's war of independence from centuries of Ottoman rule and is also considered one of the holiest days for Greek Orthodox Christians, celebrating the Annunciation of the Theotokos.

Greece's desire for self-determination was fuelled by Greeks who chose to follow in the tradition of self-government enshrined in ancient Greece, the world's first

democracy. Thousands of years of culture and history have since embodied the modern state of Greece.

The Greek community here in Ontario has thrived for over 100 years, contributing immensely to the political, economic and social fabric of our province. Be it in business or in academia, Greeks have always played an important role in shaping our province's civic and cultural institutions. Today at Queen's Park, I had the honour of participating in the Greek flag-raising ceremony where we celebrated Greece's rich history and statehood.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge several distinguished guests from the Greek community who are here with us this afternoon: Consul General Dimitris Azemopoulos; Nikona Georgakopoulos, the president of the Greek community; and Bishop Christoforos of the Greek Orthodox Church.

Mr. Speaker, using my best Greek possible, Zito É Ellas, Zito to Ontario, and Zito O Kanadas.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Rod Jackson: Today, I'd like to recognize an initiative in my community that truly understands the importance of small business in Barrie. The Creative Space is a new generation, co-working environment that gives freelancers, start-ups and microbusinesses the opportunity to work and collaborate in a creative environment.

It's the first initiative of its kind in Simcoe county and is connecting all types of creative, young businesses to each other under one roof. Each business must also demonstrate their commitment to the community through positive efforts of social, environmental and cultural change—certainly things that contribute to the fibre of our communities.

Small business is big business in Barrie and, indeed, in Ontario and the rest of Canada. More people are employed by small business than any other segment in our economy. We need to ensure that the small business with four employees this year can be the business that has 10, 15, 20 employees next year and the year after that.

Next week, our office will combine efforts with Creative Space to support small business in our community and give them information that will help them grow—information about things that the government has available for them through their different agencies.

I'd like to thank Creative Space for their efforts and their support to create jobs in Barrie—one of the highest unemployment rates in the country.

DEATH PENALTY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Many of my constituents have contacted me with concerns regarding recent events in India. On March 31, India will end its quasi-moratorium on the death penalty by hanging Balwant Singh Rajoana to death.

I have always been proud of Canada's unwavering commitment to human rights in regard to its position on the death penalty. Canada's stance echoes that of the United Nations, which has called for a moratorium on the death penalty. The death penalty undermines the dignity of life. Amnesty International describes the death penalty as the "ultimate denial of human rights. It is the premeditated and cold-blooded killing of a human being by the state. This cruel, inhumane"—and barbaric tradition—"and degrading punishment is done in the name of justice."

Canada should seize on this opportunity to reiterate our stance on human rights and support the global abolition of the death penalty. With a $1.3-billion annual trade between Ontario and India, we should encourage India to move in the right direction towards a greater, more democratic society and a more free and open society and encourage the same humanitarian values that we have here in Canada. It is imperative that we urge not only India but all nations in the world to support the United Nations' moratorium on the death penalty and to abolish this brutal and archaic practice, which sanctions the state to take a human's life.

PICKERING MUSEUM VILLAGE

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise in the House today to acknowledge a special part of our local heritage in my riding of Ajax–Pickering. Located in the hamlet of Greenwood, Pickering Museum Village educates and entertains thousands of visitors annually. Take a step back in time and explore the 19 beautifully restored heritage buildings, mostly from the early to mid-1800s. You will see a working blacksmith shop, general store, schoolhouse, steam barn, chapel, and period gardens and orchards.

Our provincial government contributed almost $300,000 to restore the Brougham Hotel, located on the grounds of Pickering Museum Village, and I was proud to attend that opening. That was approximately one third of the entire project cost.

Later this evening—tonight, Thursday—the Pickering Museum Village Foundation will host their 14th annual general meeting and prepare for another successful season. Plans are currently under way to secure funding and to plan for further expansions, including a brand new theatre, kitchen and visitor service centre.

I look forward to seeing Pickering Museum Village grow as they continue to boost local tourism and keep our heritage alive and well, thanks to the village foundation, the Pickering mayor, all of city council and all residents of Pickering.

THISTLETOWN REGIONAL CENTRE FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I rise to address the government's announcement earlier this week to close the Thistletown Regional Centre in Etobicoke and transfer

the children's mental health services offered there to local mental health agencies in the community.

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This is a very specialized facility that treats some of Ontario's most vulnerable: clients with complex mental health, behavioural and development challenges. And what we've been hearing is that there simply aren't options in community services that can accommodate the needs of those served by Thistletown.

We in the Ontario PC caucus are mindful of the need to optimize health care delivery to provide value for money, but we seriously question the ability of the system to address the needs of the 400 children and youth who are in day programs and the 15 individuals who live at Thistletown.

The process is slated to take place over the next two years, so we fully expect the Minister of Children and Youth Services will be able to monitor progression, and we expect that his ministry will provide regular and rigorous assurances that quality of care is not compromised at any point. As PC critic for children and youth services, I will certainly be demanding those assurances.

BIRTHING CENTRES

Mr. Bob Delaney: Ontario is creating birth centres, where mothers and their babies can receive great care at good value. Its part of our plan as a government to deliver more care in our community and outside of hospitals.

This week, the province announced plans for two birthing centres as pilot projects. They'll be run in partnership with Ontario's midwives, who attended more than 15,000 births last year. This will give mothers more choices, while providing good value by letting hospitals focus on high-risk care.

I guess, in this vein, I'm particularly proud to have played a role in the recent phase 2 expansion at Credit Valley Hospital, which doubled their maternity suite. That will enable us in Mississauga to provide more care for high-risk cases.

This proposal is part of Ontario's action plan for health care, which is going to move more procedures out of hospitals, providing the right care at the right time and delivering value for taxpayers.

Ontario is taking action to improve women's health centre options now, with new ideas like birthing centres.

This Ontario government has a plan to strengthen universal public health care by improving the way we serve mothers and help build families with good, sound, common sense ideas like birthing centres.

HOME CARE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rise today in order to continue on what we raised here in the House yesterday, and that is the chronic problem we're having in the northeastern region when it comes to CCACs, and I have to believe it's the same in other parts of the province.

We have literally tens of people calling every week in our Hearst office, tens of people calling in to Kap and Timmins complaining that the CCAC has been reviewing their assessment as far as need and has been reducing the amount of hours they're getting in order to be able to stay at home.

I think that not a member in this House doesn't understand that the better we're able to care for people in their homes, the better we're able to make sure there's a better health outcome, but the more money we save, because they don't have to be in a hospital or they don't have to be in a long-term-care facility.

Now, we met with the CCAC last Friday. We had a long conversation, specifically about all the cases, or at least some of the cases, that we had at that point, and they have endeavoured to do a review of these particular cases. However, the problem is this: There is $116 million in the pot for northeastern Ontario, and there's more need than there is dollars. So the CCAC is saying, "We're going to reassess people so we can move services to those who are more in need and in need of more acute care.

I understand why the CCAC is doing it, but there's a whole bunch of people who are getting their services cut, and they're going to fail. They're the ones who are going to get sicker, and they're going to end up being back in hospitals and long-term-care facilities.

I call on this government in its budget to hopefully rectify that issue, so we don't have people going into hospitals and long-term-care facilities when not needed.

SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Municipalities in my riding are joining together with a common voice to oppose a recommended change to the Ontario building code, part 8. That change would require denitrification, phosphorous removal and tertiary treatment for on-site septic systems within vulnerable areas deemed to be significant threats to drinking water sources.

Even the North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority opposes the proposed changes for tertiary treatment systems, because it is a blanket approach to reducing the significance of such threats, especially given the new building code requirement for mandatory inspections of these same systems.

These systems are significantly more costly than conventional septic systems and can result in rural home owners in parts of this province being forced to sell or walk away from their properties.

I want to read the resolutions passed by the councils of both the city of North Bay and the municipality of East Ferris directed to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing:

"Be it resolved that the proposed changes to part 8 of the Ontario building code recommended by the Ministry

of Municipal Affairs and Housing requiring the installation of tertiary treatment systems for new or replacement septic systems within vulnerable areas, as described in the drinking water source protection assessment reports, where septic systems are deemed to be a significant threat not be approved."

The township of Chisholm passed a similar resolution supporting the comments from the North Bay-Mattawa Conservation Authority.

I ask the minister to reconsider this proposed change.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The following members have given notice of their dissatisfaction with the answers to their questions given by the Minister of Health today. These matters will be debated at 6 p.m. on March 27 and March 28: the member from Nepean–Carleton, the member from Simcoe–Grey, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, the member from Newmarket–Aurora, the member from Parkdale–High Park and the member from Essex.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO FORESTRY INDUSTRY REVITALIZATION ACT (HEIGHT OF WOOD FRAME BUILDINGS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA REVITALISATION DE L'INDUSTRIE FORESTIÈRE DE L'ONTARIO (HAUTEUR DES BÂTIMENTS À OSSATURE DE BOIS)

Mr. Fedeli moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 with respect to the height of wood frame buildings / Projet de loi 52, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment en ce qui a trait à la hauteur des bâtiments à ossature de bois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

`First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I do have a short statement.

Ontario Forestry Industry Revitalization Act (Height of Wood Frame Buildings), 2012: This bill amends the Building Code Act, 1992, to provide that the building code shall not prohibit a building that is six storeys or less in building height from being a wood frame construction.

Speaker, this does not prevent the code from imposing requirements on or prohibiting specific classes of wood frame buildings.

TAXATION AMENDMENT ACT (PAYMENT OF THE ONTARIO TRILLIUM BENEFIT), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES IMPÔTS (PAIEMENT DE LA PRESTATION TRILLIUM DE L'ONTARIO)

Mr. Prue moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act to amend the Taxation Act, 2007 with respect to the payment of the Ontario Trillium Benefit / Projet de loi 53, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les impôts à l'égard du paiement de la prestation Trillium de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Taxation Act, 2007, is amended to provide that an individual who is entitled to receive the Ontario Trillium benefit for a particular year may elect to receive the benefit in a single payment rather than monthly.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

VOLUNTEERS

Hon. Charles Sousa: Today I rise in this Legislature to proudly support and promote the Volunteer Service Awards program—a time-honoured tradition in this province. These awards form the cornerstone of Ontario's recognition of our volunteers and the tremendous work they do in our communities. Each year, almost five million volunteers give their time and their heart to make Ontario a better place to live. They coach teams, they care for the elderly, and they mentor new Canadians. They organize charitable events, and, through their service to organizations and their neighbourhoods, they have a positive and direct impact on our quality of life. That's why we take time to give volunteers the thanks they deserve.

This year, 48 Volunteer Service Award ceremonies will take place in 35 communities across the province, beginning in Stratford on March 22 and ending in Kingston on June 27. Over 10,000 volunteers will be recognized and receive a stylish Trillium pin. Mr. Speaker, I know that many of my parliamentary colleagues will honour their constituents by attending these events. For those of you who have not had an opportunity to attend a ceremony or have not attended one in a while, I strongly encourage you to do so this year.

I also urge my colleagues to nominate deserving volunteers in their communities for our various recognition programs. There's the Ontario Medal for Young

Volunteers and the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Volunteerism. Ceremonies for these will be held throughout and during National Volunteer Week from April 15 to 22.

We will also begin our sixth annual ChangeTheWorld Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge at the same time. For 2012, we hope to get 25,000 youth volunteering for those three weeks.

Let us recognize, celebrate, and support Ontario's volunteers and continue to nurture the volunteering tradition now and in the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ENSEIGNEMENT COOPÉRATIF

CO-OP EDUCATION

L'hon. Glen R. Murray: Aujourd'hui, j'invite tous les membres de l'Assemblée législative à se joindre à moi pour célébrer la Semaine nationale de l'enseignement coopératif qui a lieu du 19 au 23 mars. C'est une merveilleuse occasion de souligner que les programmes d'enseignement coopératif apportent une importante contribution à l'expérience d'apprentissage des étudiantes et des étudiants universitaires et collégiaux de la province. L'enseignement coopératif allie la théorie et la pratique, et offre aux étudiants une formation et une expérience excellentes en milieu de travail. Il profite aux employeurs, aux étudiants, aux collectivités, à la province et aux établissements d'enseignement.

Co-op placements help build strong working relationships with employers and provide students with a source of income. They also give our students a competitive edge in securing jobs in today's challenging job market. According to a 2009 study by the University of Waterloo, co-op students earn the highest salaries and get the most prestigious jobs after graduation, compared with their non co-op peers. In some cases, they earn up to 22% more money.

Mr. Speaker, our government is helping to build the most highly skilled and educated workforce in the world, ready to meet the demands of the new economy. In Ontario, we have more than 50,000 co-op students in partnership with 31 colleges and universities across the province. Students are gaining great experience in a variety of industries, including finance, electronics, resource, and manufacturing.

I'm proud to say that Ontario has thousands of employers involved in hiring co-op students, including Research In Motion, Toronto Hydro, Rogers Communications, Arnprior Aerospace, Cisco Systems, TD Bank Financial Group, Cancer Care Ontario, the Hospital for Sick Children, Mount Sinai Hospital, The Weather Network—which we particularly enjoy these days—Rockwell Automation, and the Toronto District School Board, just to name a few. Thanks to these great partners, students are graduating with skills that employees need.

Le gouvernement de l'Ontario appuie fermement l'enseignement coopératif au niveau postsecondaire. Il fournit des subventions de fonctionnement aux collèges et universités qui offrent des programmes d'enseignement coopératif. Le crédit d'impôt pour l'éducation coopérative aide les employeurs qui embauchent des étudiants inscrits à un programme d'enseignement coopératif dans une université ou un collège de l'Ontario.

Le Régime d'aide financière aux étudiantes et étudiants de l'Ontario fournit un soutien aux étudiants, y compris à ceux qui sont inscrits à des programmes d'enseignement coopératif. Plus de 13 millions de dollars sont investis dans des projets du Programme apprentissage-diplôme dans toute la province. Trente-deux nouveaux projets ont été approuvés en 2011 et 2012. Il s'agit d'une importante augmentation par rapport aux six projets entrepris lors du lancement du programme en 2004 et 2005.

Chaque année, le gouvernement de l'Ontario embauche également 280 étudiants en enseignement coopératif par l'entremise des divers ministères.

In partnership with the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education and with Education at Work Ontario, together with colleges and universities across Canada, we celebrate the success of co-op students and graduates. I encourage all employers and local communities across Ontario to invest in co-op education and consider hiring a student, especially through the summer months. Doing so will help contribute to the growth and prosperity of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I call on all members for their support for National Co-operative Education Week. It starts March 19 to 23. Thank you for your attention.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

CO-OP EDUCATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is my pleasure to respond on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Of course, as the education critic, I think it's important for this House to recognize, as much as we're doing great work at our colleges and universities to encourage young students to take part and participate in the process of co-op, that it's also being done in our high schools across Ontario, and that's a great thing.

Co-operative education has been working in Canada for well over 50 years. There are over 800,000 young Ontarians and young Canadians that are actually participating in the co-op program, with no sign of slowing down.

As many of us know, a co-operative education is one that integrates a student's academic studies with work experience. The usual plan is for the student to alternate periods of experiencing career-related fields with their studies. I bet you that if I asked every member of this assembly if they've ever had a co-op student, they would all agree. Those who don't, they don't realize what they're missing. You get great gems that come into your office from time to time, and I want to mention one in

particular that has come into my life as a young fellow. His name is Ben Keller, and I know right now he's actually watching from my constituency office in Nepean. Can everybody say hello to Ben?

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's really important that you've done that. Ben has Asperger's, and his mother and father approached me a few years ago, as well as his teacher, to come work in my office. Now I've employed him as a university student, and I know the minister must be very proud of that, because he's currently going to Carleton University where he's studying Canadian politics. We are talking about him today because Ben is all things political. He's all things economic. He's all things about everything we do in this House, so it was a natural transition for him to actually come to my office, and then work as well with our federal member.

So I want to just say to all the students that are out there, whether they're in college or university or if they're in high school: There are opportunities out there for you. To all the members of this assembly, I say: There are opportunities for all of us as well, because you never know what you might find in a co-op student in Ontario.

VOLUNTEERS

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm really pleased to rise this afternoon on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus to recognize the importance of the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards and to thank the almost five million Ontarians who volunteer every year in a variety of areas.

Volunteers truly are the backbone of our community. They coach our children, they deliver meals to the frail elderly, they work in hospitals, and they also support our religious and cultural institutions. They do this without any expectation of thanks or acknowledgement. They do it just because they see that there is a job to be done and it's the right thing to do. That's what active citizenship is all about.

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But I think it is important that we do take time to recognize their accomplishments and their years of service. I can honestly say that attending the volunteer service awards ceremony in my community every year is probably one of the most satisfying things I do as an MPP, because you have the opportunity to hear about what volunteers are doing in your community. As you know, Mr. Speaker, people are recognized for years of service, from five to 10, 15, 20 and so on, up to 30, 40, 50 and sometimes even 60 years of service. In our area, the room is always packed, and it is astonishing to see the number of years of service that people have contributed—the number of people with 50-plus years of service is truly astonishing.

I'm told that in 2012, over 10,000 Ontarians in over 47 communities are going to be receiving Volunteer Service Awards, and they will be recognized by their local communities. In closing I would just like to extend a heartfelt thank you, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, to all the volunteers who contribute so much to their communities across Ontario. They truly are what makes our communities great.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Michael Prue: In response to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I stand fully in support of what the province is doing around volunteers. We have about five million volunteers in this province, who contribute up to 800 million volunteer hours every year. Without them, I don't think that many of the organizations they serve would be able to exist, and certainly without them Ontario would be a much poorer place.

They provide opportunities that only a volunteer can do. Only a volunteer can give that face-to-face comfort to someone in a nursing home. Only a volunteer can deal with children in a way that the child will actually know this is a person who is trying to help them, not because they are being paid but because they love it. Our volunteers help the elderly, they help people with disabilities and they help children. They work on the environment: This is the spring, and you're going to see them all out there on cleanup days around municipalities and on the streets and highways of the province. They help municipal governments—certainly most municipal governments would have a very tough time meeting their municipal programs without the help that volunteers provide.

In these times of austerity where certain programs may not continue to exist, I commend that this one is continuing for this year, and I hope, given the small amount of money that is involved, that it will continue to exist and to roll out in the face of the economic downturn that the government is finding itself in. It is important for the recognition of these people and organizations that come forward. But what is also almost equally important is that it highlights these people and organizations to the community, so that others who are not volunteering now or who may consider volunteering see this wonderful opportunity and will come forward and give of their time and of their talents as well.

I just want to read out some of the volunteers and organizations from my riding that will be recognized at the Beaches–East York and Scarborough awards ceremony on March 26. The volunteers include Richi Bachan and Luisa Bachan, who are each getting 10-year awards; E. Elongo is getting a five-year award; Johanne Forbes, a 40-year award; Whitney Goodfellow, a five-year award; Alex Parucha and his wife, Corazon, each 25 years; and Kirsten Parucha, who I'm sure is probably a relative, is getting a youth award.

Some of the organizations are the Sai Nilayam Spiritual Organization, Girl Guides of Canada, Warden Woods Community Centre, Filipino Parents Association and, last but not least, the Filipino Canadian Veterans Legion Inc.

This is just an example, these ones from Beaches–East York. There are going to be 107 groups like this, from every riding across the province. Please, if you have an opportunity and if you can make it, go out and say thank you to the people who give of themselves for the benefit of our community.

CO-OP EDUCATION

Mr. Michael Prue: I also have to respond today to the Minister of Colleges and Universities on co-op students and training. You know, every year we have tried in the past to get a co-op student. We've not always been successful, but this year we've got a co-op student from York University. He's studying to be a social worker, and we got him. His name is Curtis. Curtis is absolutely amazing. Curtis has to do 700 volunteer hours in our office in order that he can get his degree at the end of the year.

Over the course of the last many months while he has been in our office, it is remarkable to watch this young man. It is remarkable to see the kind of work that he can do, the dedication he has to the work, the enthusiasm that he brings with him every single day to our office. He has learned to help people who have housing problems, employment problems. He has helped people navigate through government in order to obtain benefits. He has helped people who have problems in the medical sphere. And all of this is in order that he can better understand the career and the role that he has chosen for himself upon graduation.

I know he is going to make his 700 hours, and I know at the end he's going to get a glowing report from me. But if that were not enough, Curtis, in his time off, even though he is spending 700 hours with us, spends most of his free time helping put up homes with Habitat for Humanity, because he believes with all of his heart that if we can solve the housing problems of the people of this city and of this province, we can solve great problems of poverty and those things that he wants to dedicate his life to, in the help of ordinary people. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

PETITIONS

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. John O'Toole: It's an honour and a pleasure to read a petition to the Legislative Assembly on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. There was a meeting last night in Cartwright, and this is the petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Cartwright High School is an important part of the Blackstock and area community; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools help to keep communities strong'; and

"Whereas schools in rural areas are community places; and

"Whereas Cartwright students, families, friends and staff have created an effective learning experience that emphasizes a community atmosphere, individual attention and full participation by students in school activities; and

"Whereas the framework of rural schools is different from urban schools and therefore deserves to be governed by a rural school policy; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government found $12 million to keep" school swimming pools open in Toronto "but hasn't found any money to keep rural schools open in communities such as Blackstock"—the Minister of Education said it's not true; well, I challenge her;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the Cartwright High School community and suspend plans to close Cartwright High School under the school board's accommodation review process until the province develops a rural school policy that respects the value of smaller schools in rural communities of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign it, support it and give it to Emma, one of the new pages here, from Oakville.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further petitions? The member from Hamilton–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you. Close.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates $2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

"Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario's horse racing and breeding industry;

"Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

"Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates $1.1 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

"Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government $1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Call on the government of Ontario to protect the $1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this and will sign my name to it.

1340

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada;

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bioartificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bioartificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to my friend the page here.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas global climate change is the most serious threat facing humanity and poses significant risks to our environment, economy, society and human health; and

"More than 97% of scientists working in the disciplines contributing to studies of our climate and all national science academies accept that climate change is almost certainly being caused by human activities mainly due to the use of fossil fuels; and

"The objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change…is 'stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system'; and

"Climate scientists are now warning us that limiting global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees" Celsius "is essential; and

"Ontario has a clear responsibility to reduce our emissions given that our per capita greenhouse gas emissions are among the highest in the world; and…

"The best research today indicates that energy demands are decreasing and that sufficient potential energy from a diverse supply of renewable sources exists to meet Ontario's current and projected energy demands;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately prepare a plan that requires that 100% of Ontario's stationary energy be from zero-carbon sources before the end of 2023, with a timeline to be audited annually by the Auditor General and published reports."

I couldn't agree more, Mr. Speaker. I'll sign my name and give it to Felix to be delivered to the table.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My offices continue to be inundated with phone calls and concerns and petitions with regard to the Bluewater centre. Today I read to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the closure of the Bluewater Youth Centre will have a negative economic impact on Goderich and the surrounding area; and

"Whereas there is a need to deal with overcrowding in the Ontario correctional system; and

"Whereas the federal Bill C-10, Safe Streets and Communities Act, will increase the population in the Ontario correctional system over the next four years; and

"Whereas the Bluewater Youth Centre would need very little retrofitting and the staff would need minimal retraining to open as a medium-secure correctional facility which could hold more than 200 beds required by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services; and

"Whereas specialized treatment programs within the correctional system such as drug treatment, mental health issues, could be offered with the skilled support staff currently in place; and

"Whereas we believe that this is the most economical way to add an additional 200 beds to the Ontario correctional system, as the building is in place and staff are currently hired to run such a facility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government engage in meaningful community and employee consultation in order to find alternate uses within the youth services or correctional services system for this facility, thereby preventing job losses and economic hardship for an area already badly impacted by plant closures and tornado damage."

I agree with this petition, and I'm pleased to give it to Nicholas to take to the table on my behalf.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to submit a petition on behalf of the horse racing industry and breeding industry in Ontario, members of which will be gathered outside of the Windsor Raceway today in protest against the government's decision to kill this industry. Although I can't be there with them today, I'm certainly standing in solidarity with them in this House. I'm pleased to submit the petition that reads:

"Whereas the Ontario horse racing industry and breeding industry generates $2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

"Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario's horse racing and breeding industry;

"Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks

and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

"Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates $1.1 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

"Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government $1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Call on the government of Ontario to protect the $1.1 billion of revenue the government receives annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program, direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program."

I'm proud to affix my name to this petition, and I'll submit it with Hassan.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition this afternoon to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We, the undersigned, residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada;

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bioartificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bioartificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted in several centres in the United States" of America.

I agree with this petition and will give it to page Emily.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have this petition coming from the people of the northeast.

"Whereas the Ontario government" has made PET scanning "a publicly insured health service...; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are performed "in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario," with Health Sciences North, "its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through" Health Sciences North, "thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens" of the northeast.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Ammaar to bring it to the Clerk.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Rosario Marchese: "Whereas 700 affordable TCHC homes are in danger of being sold off to the private sector;

"Whereas the sell-off will reduce the diversity of neighbourhoods and lead to an increasingly divided Toronto;

"Whereas the sell-off will further reduce the inadequate supply of affordable housing for the 80,000 households already waiting for affordable housing;

"Whereas the sell-off will require the displacement of thousands of men, women and children from their homes, schools and communities;

"Whereas there are a range of other options to deal with the repair shortfall that exists, including drawing on Infrastructure Ontario loan funds, seeking support from higher levels of government, investing in retrofits to reduce utility costs, and partnering with non-profit and co-op housing providers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the Minister of Housing not to approve the sale of the TCHC units, but instead to work with the city of Toronto and TCHC to explore more just, sustainable and economically viable ways to address the repair backlog in TCHC's scattered housing stock."

I support this petition very strongly.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

AFFORDABLE ENERGY AND RESTORATION OF LOCAL DECISION MAKING ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE ET LE RÉTABLISSEMENT DE LA PRISE DE DÉCISIONS LOCALE

Mr. Hudak moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Environmental Protection Act with respect to renewable energy / Projet de loi 42, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité et la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement en ce qui concerne l'énergie renouvelable.

1350

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. Hudak.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker.

Today I rise on my private member's bill, the Affordable Energy and Restoration of Local Decision

Making Act, because I believe fundamentally that affordable energy is a building block of a strong economy and a strong province of Ontario, the kind of Ontario that meets the priority expectations of Ontario families: excellence in education; dependable and quality health care; world-beating infrastructure. But to be able to pay for these things, we need to get the basics right. And among the most basic of all economic fundamentals is affordable and reliable energy. This will help us power up Ontario's innovators, its job creators, its entrepreneurs.

Speaker, not that long ago, Ontario was one of lowest-cost jurisdictions for energy, not just in Canada but in North America. But today, under the current government's failed energy policies, we're among the highest, and heading to having the second-highest energy rates in all of North America. Behind that rapidly rising cost of energy is a policy that treats affordable power not as an economic fundamental but as a plaything for social engineers, and it's called the feed-in tariff program, or FIT, for short. This feed-in tariff program is nothing more than an outdated, 1990s-era, European-style industrial scheme that has been a failure everywhere it has been tried in the world, and it's failing here in the province of Ontario.

Ironically, the Premier likes to refer to Ontario as a leader when it comes to the FIT program. The reality is, he's leading from the caboose; and when it comes to the green energy train, everyone else is getting off. He was the last one in and he's the last one grabbing on to this outdated 1990s industrial policy. So if you look around the world at policy-makers in Spain, Germany, Italy, Denmark and France, all, it seems, have been a failure. Housing rates have gone through the roof. They've lost jobs; they're running up big debts. Spain, Germany, Italy, Denmark, France and others are all dramatically scaling back their wind and solar subsidies or they're exiting this business entirely. Speaker, if you ask me why are they doing that, it's because they learned the hard way the lesson that Premier McGuinty still doesn't get: that these types of expensive subsidies flunk every basic test of economics.

The feed-in tariff program pays unsustainable subsidies to energy developers for 20-year-or-more contracts, and it pays them whether we actually need the power or not. And the fact is, in Ontario in 2012, and particularly on days like today, we don't.

This program helps us understand the bizarre scenario where we actually are exporting surplus power to Quebec and New York—actually paying Quebec and New York to take the power off our hands. My colleague Mr. Yakabuski, from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, will be talking about that later on. All told, the subsidies to Quebec and New York to take the surplus power off our hands total some $2 billion since 2006—actually paying them. While families and businesses in Ontario are paying more and more for energy, we've been paying Quebec and New York to take that power off our hands.

At the same time, another flaw in this outdated program is that ratepayers have had to pay generators up to a quarter of a billion dollars a year not to produce electricity, because renewable energy is being added to the system much faster than the growth in demand for it—and all for an approach to energy that would try to power a 21st-century economy when the wind blows and the sun shines.

You can't build a competitive economy to take on the world in the 21st century based on Mother Nature. Not only that, Speaker, but report after report says that these subsidy programs cost between two to four jobs in the broader economy for every temporary job they create through subsidies. Why is that? Because they drive up energy costs for everybody else. And furthermore, up to 75% of the temporary jobs that are created—they'd be in construction and such—don't last; they're not permanent jobs. But the two to four jobs lost in industry and the commercial sector and the resource sector, they're gone for good.

Now, I know that members opposite will wave around the minister's announcement today that said they did a two-year feed-in tariff review and say, "No, no, no, it's not true. We're scaling those subsidies back." But the problem is that the minister is basically admitting today that they've wasted billions of dollars, so they're going to waste just a couple billion more instead. It's like somebody who is driving down the road about to go off a cliff and decides that they'd better slow down. The answer is obvious: You stop the car, you turn it around and you head in a different direction and build a stronger, more prosperous province of Ontario.

Interjection: Stop the car.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Stop it.

Mr. Tim Hudak: So we say, "Stop this car. Stop this train." We hear this everywhere we go. We simply cannot afford it, and we never could. So my bill, if passed, would end this outdated 1990s industrial policy with European-style subsidies that even the Europeans are leaving behind.

Number 1: We'd end the program. Point number 2: While we're at it, my bill would actually restore the local decision-making for future projects back to municipalities, back to communities, back to the neighbours who are being impacted. It just makes common sense. After all, a local government can say where a Tim Hortons is going to go, where a Walmart is going to go, but under Dalton McGuinty's bizarre scheme, they would have no say on where 400-foot-tall industrial wind turbines on industrial wind farms that can spread 25 kilometres in length—they would have basically no say.

Further, for those thousands of approved projects that are not yet up and running, my bill would task the Minister of Energy with sorting through this mess. You ask how big this mess is. Speaker, FIT and the OPA have already been flooded with 10,000 applications and a further 50,000 applications for the microFIT program. The members opposite say that's because it's successful. It's a gold rush, it's a Ponzi scheme and it's a bubble that's going to burst, costing families billions of dollars. Let's bring this costly subsidy to an end and focus on

affordable, reliable energy to create jobs in Ontario instead.

So, 60,000 applications in the last two years. But as we all know, this is not a sign of a successful program; it's the telltale sign of a gold rush that's out of control. That's why nobody else in Canada and nobody else in North America is following this program, and those that began it in Europe are getting off the train.

This part of my legislation would empower the Minister of Energy to sort through the large wind and solar contracts not yet connected to the grid. When it comes to industrial wind farms, we're talking about 75 projects, according to the most recent OPA data, although I know this government wants to add on even more. The minister would be under an obligation to do what they refused to do: to consult with municipal leaders, neighbourhoods, communities and families who are impacted to hear what they have to say. Then, based on that local input and value for money, the minister would decide which ones proceed, which ones will be renegotiated in light of local concerns and which ones would be ended altogether to save taxpayers' money and stop the exit of jobs from our province.

We also need to reassess, in the grand scheme of things, what our real energy requirements are. But first, before adding on these unaffordable new programs, refurbish what we have. And then only build what you actually need based on a long-term plan for the economy at rates that families and businesses can actually afford. That makes sense. That has been Ontario's history: for 100 years, among the lowest industrial power rates in competing states and provinces. For 100 years, we're below the American average. Then after the Green Energy Act was passed, we moved above, and we're heading next to PEI to have the second highest costs in North America. This is bad for the Ontario economy. It's going to chill investment; it's going to chase away even more jobs. We need to stop this car, reverse course and get back to basics: reliable and affordable energy that take a strong economy through the 21st century. That's the bigger picture. That is something that this government does not seem to grasp.

1400

The fact that we always had reliable and affordable energy meant that Ontario became the industrial powerhouse not just of Canada, but of North America. It was the best place to find a good job, to start a business, to see it grow. That's been the history of the province of Ontario because we had sensible, reliable energy policy. That means this province, that we know and love, could do great things—in manufacturing, in resources, financial services, tourism, film, sports and on and on—all because we had a reliable, consistent, dependable energy supply. It's also because it was based on the laws of economics, understanding how the economy worked, because jobs and investments go where they're actually welcomed with open arms, where a sound economic climate gets the basics right, gets the fundamentals right, like affordable energy.

So, Speaker, above all else, let's pass this bill and let's get the basics right. Let's restore our focus on creating conditions for investment, for economic growth. Let's get our fiscal house back in order. Let's get taxes down; let markets work on their own with no more meddling, no more tinkering and, above all, treat energy policy as economic policy. Because, Speaker, when we get it right, when Ontario does things right, we lead Canada, we lead North America. The PC Party wants to see this great province a leader again.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Richmond Hill.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to contribute to the debate on Bill 42, a bill introduced by the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 and the Environmental Protection Act with respect to renewable energy.

I listened to the Leader of the Opposition's presentation, and when he talks about the reliability of the energy system, I fully agree with him. The energy system in this province has to be reliable. But I remind the honourable member, in those days when he was in government and his party was in government, our electrical production capacity was reduced dramatically. We had blackouts; our nuclear reactor power had to be shut down by the regulators, by the OPG—at that time, Ontario Hydro—because of the mismanagement of the electricity system.

In 2009, just almost two and a half years ago, we made a policy decision, in the history of the electrical energy industry of this province, to bring in renewable energy to the mix of electrical energy production in this province. We made the decision, Mr. Speaker, basically under three categories, under three bases: one was to shut down coal-fired plants; the second was to clean the air and the environment; and the third was, of course, to introduce and create a new industry in this province—the clean, green energy industry in this province.

I'll just take you through, Mr. Speaker, the impact of burning coal in power plants to produce electricity. It costs our province every year $4.4 billion in human costs and also in costs for the environment. Every year, 700 people are dying in this province as a result of burning dirty coal to produce electricity; 1,000 people are admitted to hospital in this province because of burning coal in our power plants; and over 330,000 people develop minor illnesses such as headache, coughing and some respiratory diseases because of burning coal in our power plants.

And there you have the economy and job creation. Ontario's Green Energy Act up to this point has created 20,000 jobs, and we're on the way to create another 30,000 more jobs in the near future.

We have built four major manufacturing corporations and plants in four cities in Ontario, in the area of the Green Energy Act—which has attracted, by the way, $27 billion in investment from domestic and foreign sources. Those cities are Tillsonburg, with 900 jobs; Windsor, 700 jobs; Don Mills, 200 jobs; and London, 200 jobs. When

you add those numbers together, it comes to 2,000 jobs already created in those four manufacturing plants.

There are another 30 companies in cities like Windsor, Tillsonburg, London, Guelph, Welland, Newmarket, Burlington, Peterborough, Hawkesbury, Cambridge and Sault Ste. Marie. They have manufacturing plants, and they have created manufacturing jobs in the area of green energy.

When I talk about the creation of jobs as a result of green energy, Mr. Speaker, I don't just mean manufacturing jobs. There are other jobs associated with this industry; for example, assembly, construction, trucking, servicing and installation, financing, engineering, electrical work, inspection, computer software and hardware etc. These are the jobs created in this industry. When it comes to employment, this is the new industry. This is the future of electrical energy production in the whole world.

Mr. Speaker, 25 years ago, when I was teaching solar energy and photovoltaics at the graduate level in a university, I could see that the day was close when we would see a new industry created in the world. Today, I am here to see that our province is the leader of this industry.

In 2010, 3.5 million people in the world were engaged as workers in the green energy industry, and the number is increasing day by day. In 2010, investment in green energy was $200 billion. Within the next nine years the investment is going to increase to $400 billion, and by the year 2030 the investment in this industry is going to increase to $460 billon. This is an industry growing and increasing and progressing. So we are on the right track, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to creating this new industry and when it comes to bringing solar energy, wind energy, biomass and biofuel to our energy mix. We are making good progress.

In the area of exporting our technology and our know-how to foreign countries, the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation are in the process of creating a strategy in order to help our industry export their products, their knowledge, their know-how and their technology to other countries. The world is ready for Canadian and Ontario technology and for Ontario equipment in the area of green energy.

Mr. Speaker, when we brought the Green Energy Act into this House and the legislation—the Green Energy Act—passed about two and a half years ago, we said that in two years we were going to review the act, and we did this. In October, the minister commissioned a review of the Green Energy Act. The FIT program basically was reviewed, and the report was announced today.

I leave it for my colleague the member from Oak Ridges–Markham to continue my discussion of this bill. She will elaborate on the review of the FIT program.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, earlier today I attended a news conference that Minister Bentley held, where he revealed the results of his FIT review. Straight out of the gate, he was saying that he has listened. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sad to say that he missed the mark. I don't know who he was listening to, because the results of the FIT review do not really touch on the issues at hand.

I am so proud of my leader, Tim Hudak, and the rest of the PC caucus, because on this side of the House we understand that residents in Ontario can no longer afford the crazy energy costs that we're currently experiencing. Furthermore, the subsidized energy cost that the Liberal government is currently encouraging through the FIT contracts is just ridiculous.

You know, the fact of the matter is, in my role as deputy critic for the green energy portfolio, I'm acknowledging that my leader's vision for a balanced supply mix, including renewable, affordable energy, would be the best competition and provide the best price for using efficient technologies. The fact of the matter is—moreover, I referenced the fact, during my debate for a moratorium, that Tom Adams said that the policy-created power crisis is going to be of a profound significance to the future of our provincial economy. We need to listen to folks.

1410

On March 6, the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation said, "I don't think it's right nor do I think it's ethical for the province to run roughshod over the will of Toronto...." Well, why is this Liberal government running roughshod over rural Ontario and imposing windmills? It's not acceptable. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Speaker, Ontario deserves affordable energy in communities that are willing to host it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I oppose this bill, and no one in this chamber or watching will be surprised. What is surprising about this bill is that it has been introduced by a Conservative politician, one who styles himself as fiscally prudent and pro-business.

This is a bill that will open Ontario up to substantial legal liability. This is a bill that will destabilize farmers who have invested in biogas or who intend to have biogas production as part of their income stream. This is a bill that will undermine solar installations in rural—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. I would ask members of the opposition that—while I was sitting in the Chair, and your members were speaking, the entire House was quiet. I would ask you to afford the other members the same opportunity to speak as the room is quiet. Thank you.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker.

First of all, liability for breaking signed contracts: I suspect everyone in this House was around when this government broke the contract for the Oakville gas-fired peaker plant. I thought the plant was a mistake in the first place, but everyone in this House said the Liberals have incurred a huge expense for us, and they need to reveal the cost.

During the last provincial election, the Liberals cancelled the power plant in Mississauga. Actually, no, they said this plant is suspended and will land somewhere in some riding sometime. Perhaps it will be on a barge in Lake Ontario. We all asked what was the cost of breaking those contracts? Speaker, I say the same today: Leader of the Opposition, what will this bill cost? How many hundreds of millions of dollars in liability will your bill cause for the province of Ontario?

The second point, Speaker, is biogas. This bill ends the feed-in tariff. So if you are a farmer who has invested money in a biogas facility on your farm, dealing with the manure problem, trying to create green energy, in fact, trying to advance agriculture in this province, I'm telling you today that this bill tells you, "Forget it, buddy." If you are a farmer who has put in $100,000 or $200,000 into a biogas facility and you're hoping to connect into the system, what this bill says is the minister may, on a whim, say, "No, you can't do that. Forget it." This bill is no friend to rural Ontario. This bill is no friend to business in this province.

If we're actually going to develop a 21st-century economy, if we're going to develop the manufacturing we need, we have to support business in this province.

I have to tell you, during the last election—

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Mr. Speaker, can you hear me?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Now that you can hear me, good.

Speaker, going door to door in my riding, I came across a gentleman in a very nice house on Logan Avenue—not the biggest house, not the smallest house. A business person, very friendly to me at the door, he said, "Sorry, I can't vote for you: I'm a Conservative." And then he said, "But what's Tim Hudak doing about renewable energy? Why are the Conservatives against business development? Do you understand that?" I said, "It beats me. It beats me, Mr. Constituent. Why is it that a pro-business party is against developing new industry in Ontario? It's a mystery."

There are inconsistencies in what has been put before us. This bill is billed as providing local power over energy development. But, Speaker, does it say that local municipalities can reject gas-fired power plants? The bill is silent. Does it say that local municipalities could reject nuclear installations? The bill is silent. Does it say that local municipalities could reject high-voltage transmission lines going through their communities? The bill is silent.

No, this is not a question of power to local municipalities or local communities. This is a bill directed at making sure that every wind and solar project, every biogas project, is stalled, pushed back and killed. That's what this bill is about.

Speaker, this bill says nothing about water power—fascinating. When I talked to some of our northern members who are working through difficulties with their communities, they asked, "Okay, if you're going to give it for wind power or solar power, what about water power?"

This bill talks about municipalities having the ability to say yea or nay to renewable power. What about unorganized communities? This bill is highly targeted, Speaker. This bill speaks to some political hot buttons. It does not consistently support business, and it certainly doesn't support the environment.

It was said earlier that the world market for renewable energy is about $200 billion; in about a decade, it will be about $400 billion. Are we or are we not going to be part of the 21st century? That's the question before us right now, Speaker.

I want to go on to another issue—and I know time is getting short and one of my colleagues wants to speak to this, but it's the cost of renewable energy in this province. Speaker, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, on March 22 of last year, posted this information on prices. He wrote that "there has been much effort made in the media to lead the public to believe that their electricity bills have been spiralling due to the cost of subsidies to wind and solar initiatives of our energy conservation programs.... Not mentioned" in those arguments "are the subsidies paid to our private natural gas generators, or those paid to Bruce Power, when the market price doesn't meet their guaranteed price (which is almost all the time)"—which is almost all of the time.

Where is our money going? Our money is going into nuclear and into gas—very little into wind.

The Environmental Commissioner says, "The latter subsidies"—relating to nuclear and gas—"involve 70% of the global adjustment monies paid out"—70%—"simply because they pay for the delivery of much more power. In fact, the Ontario Power Authority paid out $1.35 billion in 2010 to meet gas and nuclear power purchase agreements.

"So how significant are the subsidies" paid for "renewable energy and the monies paid for conservation in a typical residential electricity bill anyway?"

What the Environmental Commissioner says is 0.4 cents per kilowatt hour. He notes that we pay about 13 cents per kilowatt hour—0.4 cents for conservation and renewable energy; the big chunk of the rest goes to nuclear and gas. Face that reality. That is not addressed in this bill.

The leader raised the cost of exports, and I, frankly, found it very interesting, because I looked into that question of export-import. He notes that we spent about a billion dollars subsidizing the export of power because we had surplus from 2006 to 2011. Speaker, in almost every one of those years, renewable power was less than 2% of the mix. Overwhelmingly, our surplus comes from overbuilding of gas plants and overbuilding of nuclear power. That's where our problem is.

1420

This government and this opposition are completely open to spending $600 million to set out a plan for refurbishing the Darlington nuclear power plant, with no idea as to what the ultimate cost will be. The only

estimates I've seen in the paper are $6 billion to $10 billion. An estimate that's off by almost 100% is a ballpark; it is not an estimate. I'll tell you right now, Speaker, that there's a big difference in our hydro rates between $6 billion and $10 billion. And if we look at the history of Ontario, there's a very good chance that we will shoot up to $20 billion on that.

Speaker, others are going to take time to speak, but I want to say that if we want an affordable energy system, we have to invest primarily in efficiency and conservation. Then we invest in renewables, and those renewables need to be publicly owned, locally owned, personally owned. That's where we have to go, Speaker. This bill won't get us there. I urge everyone to vote against it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm sure it will be no surprise to anyone in this House that I also will be opposing Bill 42, and I do that with full confidence that I'm representing the views of my constituents in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham.

Our approach to clean energy and our approach to environmental protection have been the subject of many, many discussions in my riding. Many of my constituents have expressed their support for our government's programs, and in particular the FIT program. They do so because they know that not only are we producing new jobs in a new and growing industry, but, of course, we are providing a way of moving away from dirty coal and moving toward an improvement in the health of Ontarians here in the province. When it's a choice between dirty coal and our children's health, I say I'm for my children's and my grandchildren's health every single time.

Some of the costs to health have been tabulated. Not only has dirty coal cost Ontarians $4.4 billion annually—that includes health and environmental costs. There were thousands of trips to emergency rooms and hundreds of deaths due to poor air quality from dirty coal. We owe it to ourselves to clean up the air we breathe and create a sustainable system for producing electricity.

Getting out of coal has resulted in 668 fewer premature deaths per year in this province, 928 fewer hospitals admissions per year, 1,100 fewer emergency room visits per year and many, many reductions in symptoms such as headaches, coughing and respiratory symptoms each year.

Now, I was really quite astonished to hear that the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook hadn't heard about what's happening in Europe. As of this week, Germany has announced, just yesterday, a record-breaking investment—some $260 billion—in renewable energy. They wish to harness wind and solar power.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Germany?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Germany. Their goal, in fact, is to have at least 35% of their nation's power generated from renewable sources by 2020. It's clear that they recognize the great potential of this particular method of producing power that, of course, so many businesses rely on.

Some of the opportunities, I know, my colleague from Richmond Hill has referenced. I think it's really important to understand a little bit more about the global market. According to Bloomberg New Energy Finance, the annual value of renewable energy capacity installed worldwide will double in real terms, from $196 billion in 2010 to $395 billion in 2020, rising to $460 billion in 2030. And a recent study by the Brookings Institution indicated that this clean energy economy offers more opportunity and better pay than the nation's economy as a whole. So this is the time to leverage our strengths and our know-how and sell globally to create Ontario jobs.

Now, our colleagues opposite apparently have not quite understood the review of the FIT program that the Minister of Energy released this morning. There are specific references to the way of involving municipalities.

In fact, particularly pertinent to this bill, the minister and the Premier have said all along that the review would address some of the concerns that municipalities were facing with green energy projects. So we're introducing a new system that awards points to projects with municipal, community and First Nations support, ensuring that more of these projects move forward. The new program will prioritize projects that have significant community support. There will also be a specific set-aside of 10% for community and aboriginal projects.

This is demonstrative of the way that our government has listened to the concerns related to the program. We always acknowledged the need for a review, and that review has been conducted. We need to keep moving forward in terms of clean energy and creating jobs. There is no need to make Mr. Hudak's proposed amendments to the Electricity Act nor to the Environmental Protection Act, and I urge all members to vote against this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Prince Edward—

Mr. Todd Smith: Hastings. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me.

Again, I've spoken so many times on this issue here in the House that I'm getting hoarse from talking about coal. This is not about coal; this is about FIT subsidies that are enormous, and you've got to start to get that through your head over there. This is not about coal. We are in favour of renewable; we're not in favour of enormous FIT subsidies, and what the minister announced this morning doesn't go near far enough to eliminating the problem in the province of Ontario.

I'm going to take a different tack, though; I'm not going to talk about coal and renewable energy. But I would like to say that the only minister in this House to ever close a coal plant sits right down there: Liz Witmer from Kitchener.

I want to tell you quickly about Stan and Tim, okay? They're two business owners in my area, in Prince Edward–Hastings. Quickly, Stan owns a grocery store. He used to own two; now he only owns one, right in the

heart of Bancroft. Why? Because he couldn't afford to run his freezers anymore in his grocery store, he had to close it down. It's a sad, sad story.

I can tell you what. The Minister of Energy and Liz Witmer have an awful lot in common. They have both closed things, right? Liz Witmer closed a coal plant; the Minister of Energy closed Stan's grocery in downtown Bancroft.

I only have a few minutes left—a few seconds left, actually—but I just want to say that I strongly support our leader, Tim Hudak, for taking this action today and putting this bill forward, because the Auditor General has said prices are going to go up 46% on electricity over the next couple of years. It's time to stop this vehicle from going over that cliff. Jam on the brakes and end this FIT subsidy now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I just want to start by leading off where the previous member spoke and to say, "A pox on both your houses." We had a public utility system in Ontario that delivered electricity at cost. We were the most competitive, with the lowest rates in Ontario. Since the Conservatives started the privatization deregulations, the Liberals have accelerated it, and now we're one of the most expensive jurisdictions in North America, and that's at the hands of both of these governments. So I just say, 'A pox on both your houses."

I want to speak to the local ownership part of the bill that is not contained within the bill, particularly in my part of the world—for example, Smooth Rock Falls. Smooth Rock Falls lost the only employer in town. The old Abitibi mill, owned by Tembec, was closed down. The community could have got into running water. They could have got into the business of taking over the hydro dam that Tembec had, as a way of raising revenue to offset the taxes they lose as a result of ripping down that mill. The government made no attempt in order to make that happen, and this particular act would not facilitate that process.

Why don't we allow municipalities and others to be involved in the hydro business in the sense of doing not-for-profit, so that we can use some of that money and put it back into our communities?

For Smooth Rock Falls, they lost—I think it's $1.2 million per year in assessment in a community of about 1,500 or 1,600 people. That particular plant—if it had been allowed to be transferred into the municipality, owned by the municipality, so they could take the revenue from that dam, they could have at least offset it.

1430

The other one is what happened in Hearst. We had a biomass project. We've got what we call heritage woodpiles, all the old wood shavings that come out of the old mills. There's a private sector developer, in partnership with the municipality and one of the other mills there, that wanted to clean up those old sites—clean up essentially brownfield sites—to compost and to burn that particular material, or dry and burn that material, to generate heat in order to make electricity and to sell the steam to the plant next door as a way of reducing their costs. It would have allowed at least something to happen in that community that would reduce their reliance on electricity from other places, and at the same time they're cleaning heritage woodpiles. Does this bill accomplish that? No. And I will vote against it for those reasons.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today to support the bill brought forward by my leader, the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook, the Affordable Energy and Restoration of Local Decision Making Act. The bill would cancel the FIT and microFIT programs, which have resulted in this skyrocketing increase in hydro bills—in everybody's hydro bill—across the province of Ontario. It was mentioned that there's a few large, non-resident companies making obscene profits while average working families in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock can hardly pay their bills. They have to choose, some of them, between paying their hydro bills and feeding their children. A day doesn't go by in my office where there's not a call about these skyrocketing hydro rates.

Instead of working to bring the rates down or stopping the car before it goes over the cliff, as was said before, the government continues with its expensive green energy experiments which punish Ontario's most vulnerable.

This bill would restore local decision-making powers to the municipalities. My municipalities of Kawartha Lakes and Cavan Monaghan, which are affected by these projects, have certainly passed resolutions saying they want the authority back. They hear every single day the impact of these wind turbines and solar farms on their people: the decrease in the property values, the potential risks to human health and to animal health. I mean, there's real people out there with real health problems. This government isn't listening.

I just want to quickly say that the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers report on wind and the electrical grid states, "Apart from the health and safety concerns of nearby residents, wind generation is intermittent, it has a low capacity factor and it delivers its energy when nature provides it rather than when consumers want it. These weaknesses make wind generation one of the most technically challenging and costly energy sources to integrate into the electrical grid."

If you won't listen to us, maybe you'll listen to the engineers. I don't know, Mr. Speaker, but I'm pleased to stand in support of this bill today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Renfrew–Nippissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to join this debate today and support our leader, Tim Hudak, in his private member's bill. When this government took over, power was 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour for the residents. It's now up to 10.8. What has happened? Well, it can be explained in a couple of different phrases.

We can start with the provincial benefit now becoming global adjustment. I was the energy critic when this bill was tabled in the Legislature. We fought this tooth and nail, and our caucus told this government and the people of Ontario what the results of their Green Energy Act and their FIT program would be. The chickens have come home to roost. The mess that they've got now—they don't call it the provincial benefit anymore, Mr. Speaker, because it used to be a negative number where people were actually getting a benefit on the other side. Now it's just costing them money every month, 4.85 cents per kilowatt hour this month—for every kilowatt hour, 4.85 cents. That is a result of their feed-in-tariff program, because it is directly measured as the difference between the market price of the power versus what we are paying to the generator. And we are paying these generators excessive amounts.

It's also resulting in us paying other jurisdictions to take our power. In the last 10 days alone, we have paid as much as—today, the price of power was at minus 12.8 cents a kilowatt hour. That's what we're paying other people to take our power. In the last 10 days, it has hit that number three times, and it has ranged in between there since then. That's the kind of mess that has been created by this FIT program.

A fellow in my riding who's got a solar installation said to me—I said, "What do you think about this, about the grandmother who can't pay her hydro bills, and you're getting 80.2 cents a kilowatt hour for your solar installation?" You know what he said to me? He said, "Yak, if that government down there in Toronto is stupid enough to pay me 80 cents, I'm smart enough to take it." That's the kind of thing that's happening out there, and it has got to stop.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to address Tim Hudak's Affordable Energy and Restoration of Local Decision Making Act.

Before I commence, I want to bring a message from local farmers from Haldimand and Norfolk. They spent the morning in the visitors' gallery. They wanted me to pass this on: They were just disgusted with the behaviour in here. They were also disgusted with the reasons for the behaviour: the compromise of responsible government in the province of Ontario.

Further to that—and this legislation will help—yesterday I filed a letter with the EBR commentary with respect to the Samsung project. Down in Haldimand, 67 towers are going up, and, in addition, something like 800 acres of solar, something the Haldimand federation has formally protested. These kinds of postings should not go out during the March break; people are on holidays.

We had to do the same thing a number of months ago with Capital Power: 58 turbines down in Haldimand county, and again, these were sent out right around July 1, just to kind of sneak it through when people are thinking of other things. Some very good reasons for a fulsome comment period: Don't rush it through. There are so many economic, environmental and physical health impacts, the impacts on property values. There's no reason to stick your head in the sand.

Yesterday, there was a presentation in the Legislative Building here by Dr. Scott Petrie, Long Point Waterfowl, who made an indication of the problems with both onshore and offshore and the effect that this has on bird migration. I would encourage everybody here to take a look at the research from Dr. Scott Petrie.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: At precisely the time we need to make Ontario a more competitive place to invest, why are we doubling down on green energy subsidies that are heavily subsidized but don't create jobs? Ontario urgently needs to kick-start our job creation and attract new investment.

The Liberals have relied on massive spending and costly subsidies for wind and solar that drive up the hydro rates, undercutting job creation and competitiveness. With job losses continuing to mount, it's clear the current subsidy program should be abandoned, not revised, as it was this morning. I'm quite sure the 670 employees who used to work at Xstrata Copper in Timmins would have appreciated their company not leaving for Quebec for cheaper hydro rates as a cause of this FIT program.

These job-killing FIT subsidies happened with 1,700 megawatts of wind and solar put on the marketplace. Now the government wants to produce 10,700 megawatts of power by 2018. The very problem that has sent our hydro bills skyrocketing and gutted our manufacturing sector is about to get six times bigger.

Only Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak's call for the immediate cancellation of the FIT subsidies is the clear solution to kick-start job creation and attract new investment in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Niagara West–Glanbrook, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I want to thank my colleagues all, so many members of the PC caucus, for standing up in support of their constituents and thoughtful economic and energy policy. I thank my colleagues in the Liberal Party and the NDP for their comments as well.

Here's the bottom line: If we want to build a strong province of Ontario, if we want to make Ontario a leader again in Canada in job creation and investment, we need to get the economic fundamentals right. That means lower marginal taxes, labour markets that work freely, making sure government does not pick winners and losers in the marketplace but creates the environment for everyone to succeed. It also means we have reliable and affordable energy.

I'm proud to be born and raised in Niagara. Now I live along the Welland River, which feeds into the Beck energy project. For all of our history in Ontario, since the Beck project went forward, we've had reliable, affordable power. It made us the economic powerhouse of

Canada, of North America, and we've lost that because of an unaffordable industrial policy from the 1990s that was rejected by those who invented it. It's in the past. We're looking to the future: reliable and affordable energy to create jobs.

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The Auditor General said it himself: 60,000 applications in the queue. That shows you a program that is a gold rush, not about sensible economic policy. For every job created, the Auditor General says that two to four jobs are lost in the broader economy. The Auditor General said that we're paying billions and billions more for these projects through FIT than would have resulted if we'd had a competitive tendering process.

The bottom line as well, Speaker, is that I hope that members opposite will stand up and support their local constituents, like those in Scarborough who want to say no to that project off the Scarborough Bluffs. I hope the minister will stand up and vote for this bill and vote for the constituents of Scarborough.

I say to my colleagues in the third party: I hope the members for Essex and Algoma–Manitoulin will stand up for their constituents who support this bill, who want to see local decision-making. Let's see how they stand on Bill 42.

FAR NORTH REPEAL ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 ABROGEANT LA LOI SUR LE GRAND NORD

Mr. Norm Miller moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act to repeal the Far North Act, 2010 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 44, Loi abrogeant la Loi de 2010 sur le Grand Nord et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to my private member's bill this afternoon.

The Far North Act eliminated 225,000 square kilometres from economic development opportunities for northern communities' and First Nations' benefit, or about 25% of Ontario's total land mass and 50% of the north.

The north is not just some empty wasteland. There are towns and villages and First Nation communities—more than 30 communities. According to census information, more than 36,000 First Nations people live in the area now defined by the Far North Act.

I've had the pleasure to visit some of those Far North communities. I once spent a day with Grand Chief Stan Beardy and went to the most northerly community in Ontario, Fort Severn. I call tell you that Fort Severn has some challenges. When I was there, the school was closed. There's high unemployment. There are problems with drugs.

On that same day—they wanted to show a struggling community and one that was doing better. The one that was doing better was Webequie, and it happens to be right in the middle of the Ring of Fire, where this huge new chromite discovery, nickel discovery, has been found. There, it was bustling. There was all sorts of economic activity—First Nations people involved in drilling and other activities to do with the mine—and some hope, is what I would say. Quite a contrast.

It's easy for Mr. McGuinty to draw a line and say, "Forget about that place," but what about the people that live in the north? Governments should be concerned with creating an environment that offers northerners the same kinds of opportunities that we expect in southern Ontario. Imagine if you tried to do that in southern Ontario: declare half of southern Ontario off limits—no agriculture, no housing, no industry. There would be a revolt here. The Far North Act is simply bad public policy.

It is possible to responsibly harvest renewable resources, particularly trees. Engineering technology makes it possible to mine responsibly. The green economy is not possible without the use of minerals and metals. Wind turbines, solar cells and hybrid vehicles are not possible without mining. The mining industry is the largest employer of First Nations people in Ontario—safe, productive, well-paying jobs. There's a wealth of resources in the north, but with the Far North Act, we'll never know what's there.

This province was built on a legacy of mining and forestry, and it could do so again, responsibly. There are tens of thousands of jobs that could be realized in the north, but not if Mr. McGuinty continues to sever off huge tracts of Ontario and then subject them to economic ruin. What is the logic for arbitrarily deciding that 50% of the north is off limits to forestry, mining and other activities?

Patrick Moore, in the book Confessions of a Greenpeace Dropout, talks about protecting areas. He says, "Of course it is important to maintain large areas of land as parks and wilderness, and make them off limits to industrial development for factories, managed forests or farms. The World Wildlife Fund, one of the" world's "largest nature protection groups, states that 10% of the world's forests should be protected from development. I would have no problem with 15% or even more in some cases." He is not saying 50%, as the Far North Act says.

He goes on to talk about the importance of forestry:

"There is the same area of forest in both the US and Canada today as there was 100 years ago; in fact, the area of forest has been growing in recent years. This is despite a tripling of population and an even larger increase in the consumption of food and wood products. About 85% of timber production in the US is from private lands. Those millions of … landowners could easily remove the forest from the land and grow crops like corn or cotton or raise cows for beef. But they choose to grow trees because they know they will get a good price for them to pay their

taxes, send their children to college and live a good life. Because landowners choose to grow trees, the land remains forested, providing habitat for other plants and wildlife, pulling carbon from the air, protecting soil from erosion and making the landscape beautiful. Rather than illustrating the common belief that forestry destroys the forest, it is truly a win-win solution for the environment and the economy, maintaining the land in a forested state while providing an income for the owners."

He goes on to say, "One of the great ironies of the 'environmental' movement today is that it claims to support all things renewable on the one hand while at the same time ignoring or rejecting the fact that wood is far and away the most important renewable resource. Environmental activists place huge importance on solar panels made from aluminum, silicon and gallium arsenide when in fact the most important solar collectors on earth are the leaves and needles" of our plants.

I bring that up simply because, in my opinion, the reason that half of the north is off bounds for development is because the current government is so much in bed with the environmental lobby groups based here in Toronto.

By the way, you can't make those solar panels unless you have mines to provide the aluminum, silicon etc.

Why should half of northern Ontario be off bounds for northern communities to benefit? It's not just Toronto and the GTA that drive the economy of Ontario. Let's give all the regions of Ontario the same choice to make a contribution, grow opportunities and improve living conditions.

There have been many, many different people on record opposing Bill 191, and I would like to get some of them on the record, starting off with a letter I just received from Grand Chief Stan Beardy of the Nishnawbe Aski Nation. He writes:

"The Nishnawbe Aski Nation ... Chiefs-in-Assembly passed resolutions condemning Bill 191 (Far North Act, 2010). These First Nation decisions were ignored by the provincial government of the day. The fundamental problems with the Far North Act, 2010, include the following: (1) provincial control of the land use planning process; (2) the precondition of an interconnected protected area of at least 225,000 square kilometres; (3) the provincial power to override any land use plan; (4) the provincial power to establish provisional protected areas; (5) the lack of guaranteed funding for land use planning; and, (6) the immediate freeze on most forms of modern resource development. NAN First Nations do support mutually beneficial land use planning without preconditions and respectful of treaty rights."

I'm pleased to receive that letter from Grand Chief Beardy. I agree that there should be some land use planning in the north. I'm not opposed to that.

The forestry industry—this is the Ontario Forest Industries Association—is on record as saying:

"The OFIA has never supported Bill 191. More specifically, the OFIA has never supported the government's societal and political objective to permanently protect over 50% of the northern boreal region.

"There is no scientific rationale to support the permanent protection of at least 50% of the northern boreal. The decision to permanently protect at least 50% of the area, or 225,000 square kilometres, was a unilateral, political decision made by the government of Ontario to satisfy southern special interests.

"In fact, the concept of permanent protection does not even line up with some of the government's own stated objectives and is based on incomplete information, notably when it comes to forests and carbon sequestration.

"According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, sustainable forest management, including harvest and renewal activities, can contribute to mitigation of climate change to a greater extent than protecting forests."

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I won't have time in the short time for private members, but the Ontario Prospectors Association are on record as saying: "The Ontario Prospectors Association believes the Far North Act put forward by the McGuinty Liberal provincial government will cripple exploration and related economic development in Ontario's boreal forest."

The Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association: "NOMA has been clear in expressing our view that the uncertainty created by the Far North Act is a hindrance to business investment and economic growth in northern Ontario and we will continue to advocate against this legislation."

Howard Wilson, president of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, states: "It is left to us in the business community and the First Nations, together with municipal and other regional organizations, to make the cause against economically damaging policy that would devastate our future.

"We at the chamber are the voice of business and this Far North Act is a threat to business development to our city and region."

The Prospectors and Developers Association states: "It is our recommendation ... that Bill 191, the Far North Act, be withdrawn.... The PDAC contends that Bill 191, in its present form, would deprive all the citizens of Ontario, particularly the First Nations communities that make up most of the population of the Far North, of the economic benefits that responsible mineral resource development can provide.

"Bill 191 fails to provide First Nations with an appropriate and clearly defined role in the land use planning process.

"Bill 191 seriously compromises the ability of the minerals sector to operate in the Far North by reducing the land base available for exploration by 50% or more, relegating the minerals sector to a peripheral role in land use planning, and damaging investor confidence in mineral exploration activities in the region.... We should

not start with prescribed limits that are not based on science, and are not based on the needs of the people. Indeed, land use planning in the Far North should begin with widespread geologic mapping and mineral exploration."

The Northwestern Ontario Prospectors Association states: "I believe the Far North Act removes too much land from exploration and without the approval of the very people who live there, being the First Nations people.... It seems unwise and unfair to remove such a large piece of Ontario from the possibility of generating wealth for both the First Nations and the coffers of the Ontario government." As prospectors, "We go out with a hammer and a packsack, and the footprint on the ground is minimal."

The Whitewater Lake First Nation state: "We are ... in the desperate situation of being almost totally engulfed" by a provincial park. "This has completely stymied our efforts to get involved in modern terms of economic development such as mining, forestry and hydroelectric projects. We cannot even get a road into our community...."

"Ontario is prepared to put aside 50% of the far north for caribou, polar bears and wolverines; however, Indian reserves do not even amount to 1% of the area. Whitewater Lake has nothing. Why the disparity in treatment?"

Mr. Speaker, there are many more quotes from chambers of commerce etc. that are opposed. I simply say the reason I'm opposed is this taking of 50% of the land mass of northern Ontario away from the benefit of the people of the north, in particular, and all Ontario; I strongly object. It will hurt northern Ontario and hurt the entire economy of the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm not going to mince words. This is a very bad bill. If there was ever any doubt that the PC Party and its members do not understand or care about northern Ontario, this bill puts a firm exclamation point to that fact.

In this bill, the Conservatives are basically saying to the north, "We in southern Ontario know better than you." Why are they saying that? Because First Nations are saying, "We don't like the Far North Act, but we don't want it revoked without a replacement," and our municipalities are saying the same thing. In fact, the president of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association went public with his concerns about this bill in the Chronicle-Journal on March 18.

Ron Nelson, president of NOMA, was quoted as saying, "NOMA does not support Bill 44, Far North Repeal Act, 2012, but neither do we support the Far North Act in its current form....

"We remain concerned that the process for developing the Far North Act has created a divisive and uncertain environment that is contrary to the intent of the legislation."

But despite this, the Conservatives push on because they think that they know better. If passed, this bill would be a disaster for northwestern Ontario—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And the northeast.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: And the northeast.

While the Far North Act itself is flawed and the way it was introduced is wrong, it does lay some groundwork and some processes that will lead to the eventual development of the Ring of Fire.

We in the NDP think there's a better process than the act that's currently in place. We believe that, through consultation with mining companies, First Nations and people living in the north, we can develop a plan that speeds up development significantly and leaves First Nations happy and mining companies happy, and equally important, it leaves people in our region employed. This is why earlier this afternoon I tabled the following motion:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should immediately move to implement a consultative process in the north to consider changes to the Far North Act. The review shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

—elimination of the provision in the act that allows the government to arbitrarily overrule land use plans and allow development whenever the government determines that development is in the "social and economic interests" of Ontario;

—adequate funding of First Nations land use planning;

—implementation of provisions that allow for the creation of a joint body that would be composed of equal numbers of First Nations members and government of Ontario officials. This joint body would advise on the development, implementation and coordination of land use planning in the Far North, as well as perform any other advisory function to which the First Nations and Minister agree;

—serious consideration of the innovations similar to those included in Quebec's Plan du Nord such as a coordinating body for public investments in the Far North and an effective resource revenue-sharing model which provides for the sharing of revenues between First Nations and the Ontario government on all resource-related projects in the Far North; and

That new legislation be introduced to replace the existing Far North Act upon completion of this consultative process.

So the point that I'm trying to make is that scrapping the Far North Act and not replacing it with something better stalls these processes and leaves a legislative void in its place.

Instead of a system that could work better, this proposal would see us have no system at all, and mining will be stalled indefinitely until a new system is developed and put in place, at which point the mining companies and First Nations will need time to meet the requirements of a new set of regulations, assuming, of

course, that there are new sets of regulations. If there aren't and if we're left with a situation that would be not unsimilar to the Wild West, I can guarantee that there will be no development at all. If the Conservatives are considering doing this and if they're considering the scrapping of this act in an appeal to the mining companies, they're way off base.

If you speak to mining companies, they essentially want three things. They want to know where they can explore and how they can go about it in terms of working with First Nations, and they want the government to assist with developing key infrastructure to make this happen. This bill addresses none of those things, and it would be a truly regressive step that would put us years behind where we currently are.

What the people in the north are saying is that we don't like the act, we don't like how it was imposed without meaningful consultation, much like this Conservative bill, but we don't want it scrapped without anything being put in place. We want something better.

Replacing the Far North Act is what my party campaigned on, and it's what we plan to do because we know a system can be found that works. A great template for that system currently exists in northern Quebec. There, the province's Plan du Nord was developed in consultation with mining companies, First Nations and other interested parties. It laid out a clear system for development, and now the region is booming.

We firmly believe that this can serve as a model for a new Far North Act, and we intend to work with northerners to develop it. This is what the north wants.

Frankly, this is even what Don Drummond wants. Even he gets it. If you've listened to the Conservatives during many of their debates in this House, you'd think that Mr. Drummond was the Leader of the Opposition. So why, when the Conservatives suggest that we should adopt everything that Mr. Drummond recommends, would they do something that would jeopardize the economic development in the Far North when Mr. Drummond clearly spells out the important role that the Ring of Fire will have in our economy and the need for First Nations to benefit? Which is it? Because the Conservatives are clearly contradicting themselves.

Every day they speak to the importance of us implementing everything that Mr. Drummond recommends, yet there seems to be a double standard when it comes to their agenda. They keep saying that they want to lead, but they're not presenting any ideas. Instead of presenting an alternate vision of their own, they're saying their plan is nothing. They have no plan, and that is evidenced most poignantly from this proposed repeal of this act.

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By contrast, New Democrats have a plan. We have a vision for the north—one that includes economic prosperity for everyone living in the north, where good-paying jobs are plentiful, where First Nations communities are respected partners in development, and where environmental interests are balanced with the need for economic prosperity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to participate in this debate and certainly to express our party's very strong feelings that the legislation being put forward by the member of Parry Sound–Muskoka is, indeed, a very bad piece of legislation, a very regressive one.

May I say, I'm grateful to have had the opportunity to hear the comments from my critic, the member from Kenora–Rainy River, related to her feelings, and presumably her caucus's feelings, on this potential legislation being put forward.

The fact is that the Far North Act, 2010, put into law for the first time in Ontario's history a requirement for First Nation approval of land use plans in the Far North of our province. Certainly that is one aspect that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has essentially brushed off as not being particularly significant, but he would just simply put that aside.

A key objective stated in that act is enabling sustainable economic development that benefits First Nations. When the Far North Act was first introduced in 2009, there were almost no land use plans or strategies in place to allow for sustainable development of natural resources or to ensure that any environmentally or culturally significant areas were protected. So this ultimately has become, I think, what will be described as milestone legislation, and it does represent an unprecedented opportunity to initiate progress and positive change in the far north of Ontario.

May I say, again, in further response to my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River, we want to work with the communities in the far north and with the members of the Legislature to find the kind of flexibility we need to make the act work even better, through either regulatory aspects or policy-making aspects of the legislation that's in place. There's no question that we have some great opportunities here.

This is about striking a balance, Mr. Speaker, that we do, I think, have an obligation to strive to find—something that the official opposition, the Conservatives, don't seem to be as concerned about—a balance between economic development and between conservation, and this is the opportunity that we have. We're talking about 24,000 people; I think it's 36 remote communities, many of them fly-in communities. This is a unique opportunity for us to partner with the First Nations in the far north to draw from their traditional knowledge in this planning process to ensure that we get it right.

We do know—it's certainly something we would say makes sense from the perspective of most parts of Ontario—that good planning leads to good development, which creates good jobs and a strong economy. What's unique about the land use planning process under the Far North Act is that decision-making has been consensus-based. We are working in partnership with First Nations to determine which areas will be protected and what will be developed.

The truth is, Mr. Speaker, too, that there are five land use plans that have already been put in place—we've got agreements on them—some great examples that could really, really make it very, very clear that the point of view put forward by the official opposition is just so darn wrong about opportunities for development in northern Ontario.

Pikangikum First Nation completed the first community-based land use plan in the Far North in 2006. It clearly identified opportunities for mineral sector activities, commercial forestry, while identifying areas of cultural significance for protection. It also, may I say, Mr. Speaker, was one that I think set a really good example as a model.

The most recent agreement we signed was with Cat Lake and Slate Falls First Nation. Their land use plan was approved in July 2011. In this case—I could break it down for you, but I want to use my time judiciously—the determination was made by the communities that 65% of the land in their traditional territories would be open to opportunities regarding development. So the case was made, the discussions took place, and that 65% was open for development. The 35%, they determined, were areas for cultural protection.

The fact is that that very much makes the point that this process, which is under way in almost every other far north First Nation community, is about making decisions related to what works for those communities in terms of development, which then, of course, provides the absolute clarity the industry has been calling for. Again, my colleague across the way from Kenora–Rainy River made reference to how important it is for industry to have that clarity. Well, indeed it is, and once they have that clarity as to where the development is welcome, I think it provides for some tremendous opportunities.

I must say also that I had a very good opportunity—the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka was going through a list of those that he chose to define as being opposed to the Far North Act. Some of my colleagues in this House noticed that he was reading sections of letters rather than reading the full document. I can certainly speak about a number of those.

But let me just at least begin with a conversation that I had yesterday with Grand Chief Stan Louttit of Mushkegowuk Tribal Council, First Nations. May I thank again my colleagues across the way from Kenora–Rainy River and Timmins–James Bay, for helping set that up.

Yes, there is no question: Grand Chief Stan Louttit and many other chiefs that were on that phone call that I was on certainly expressed their concerns about the process by which the Far North legislation was brought forward. There is no question about that, and it would not be helpful for me to pretend otherwise.

But what they made very, very clear was that the process under which they are now engaged in terms of the land use planning process is one they want to continue to move forward on. It was a very exciting conversation for me from the point of view of recognition that, yes, indeed, we need to have some more conversations. There are some aspects of the legislation they want to discuss with our ministry and with myself as minister; I'm more than happy to do that. But what was most exciting about it was the fact that they laid the cards on the table and made it clear: "We did not particularly like the process that brought this legislation forward, but we are very pleased to have an opportunity to be engaged in a partnership with the province in a land use planning process that simply wasn't in place before." Again, that's the kind of opportunity that we have to provide clarity to industry, while at the same time showing the proper respect for the First Nations. So I'm very grateful for that opportunity with Grand Chief Louttit and with the other chiefs who were on the call.

May I say, I've had many opportunities to speak with Grand Chief Stan Beardy, a good friend of mine, someone I've worked with for many years, of Nishnawbe Aski Nation. I was recently at a NAN energy conference in Thunder Bay, and I spoke about the Far North legislation. Again, I won't stand here and say that I received a rousing ovation for my remarks, but I certainly was treated respectfully, and we agreed to carry on the conversation, as we have in the past. That has been the key, quite frankly, to us moving forward with so many other measures, including, may I say, the modernization of the Mining Act—quite a remarkable process.

Mr. Speaker, I do need to wrap up. One of my colleagues, from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, very much wants to say a few words as well.

Let me speak quickly about NOMA, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association. I met with them on March 9. I'm reaching out as best I can to all organizations. NOMA, of course, being the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association—I had a good conversation with them. I think, to some degree, the fact that we had a good hour to spend together was a factor in them making the determination that, indeed, they did not support the repeal of the Far North land use planning act, the Far North legislation. I'm grateful for that. The chambers of commerce—I wish we had more time—we're working with them as well, and we'll continue to work with them.

I look forward to working with my colleagues. But I certainly hope that everyone in this Legislature recognizes that this piece of legislation is a very bad one, I say to my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka, and it should be defeated this afternoon. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The Far North Act is exactly the kind of bill that irks northerners. Somebody in southern Ontario developed a solution for a problem that only exists in the minds of those in the south, and forced a bill onto the north.

We've heard some names thrown around here today; let me just remind you. The Ontario Prospectors Association, in the Kirkland Lake Northern Daily News on October 12, said the bill will cripple exploration. And, yes, the Mushkegowuk Council's grand chief, Stan

Louttit, said in the Timmins Daily Press on December 31: "We've made it very clear to the government that we stand united in opposition to this bill. There are issues in regard to the bill's key jurisdictions, as well as treaty rights that are not being recognized."

Speaker, as mayor of the city of North Bay at the time this act was passed, I can tell you there was extremely limited discussion in northern Ontario and northern Ontario consultations. And as you've heard me read, the First Nations have been very critical in their criticism.

1510

Speaker, when you look at a photo of a cathedral, 200 years from now, that photo is going to look the same, that cathedral is going to look the same, but a forest is quite different. The softwoods fall, they create fuel for the hardwoods, and the forest burns. Look at what happened in the northwest this summer, one of the most raging summers that we've had out there, causing destruction all through the northwest. Forests need to be properly managed. That is something that I think all of our parties would agree on.

Let me talk a little bit about the mining side now. Let me talk about the Ring of Fire. As members know, I have ventured up there in the summer and in the winter and belong to the very few members who have actually been to or actually set foot in the Ring of Fire. We look at the Far North Act and the land that it takes out of play in both the forestry and the mining sector. If this act had been passed only a few years earlier, could you imagine the fact that the Ring of Fire would not have been discovered? So we say, if this is the kind of activity that is going to happen through the Far North Act—you can't have mining exploration—then I would ask you: What else are we not discovering today in the area that's now a museum in northern Ontario? What else are we not discovering?

I would say, for the businesses in Nipissing riding, the 70 mining and manufacturing-related companies—we are heavily in the exploration business. This is big business to us as well; 70 companies in North Bay and Nipissing rely on the forestry and mining sector. I don't see anybody in southern Ontario standing up for them. Of course, you've heard me say this in the House many times. To those here in southern Ontario, there is nothing really farther north of Steeles Avenue. This is a really great example of exactly that philosophy: that they just don't believe that anything exists north of Steeles Avenue.

This Far North Act makes a virtual museum of such a vast piece of northern Ontario, Speaker, that it puts the businesses—the hard-working men and women in the city of North Bay and the riding of Nipissing—in jeopardy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Speaker. I think they've given me about three minutes and 45 seconds here—not a lot of time, but thank you. I'm happy to have a few minutes.

Number one, on the characterization of the legislation as being the south jamming the north: I would remind the member opposite who brought the legislation forward that not that many years ago we brought in a piece of legislation called the greenbelt that protected 1.8 million acres of land down here in southern Ontario, from Kingston right across the top of Toronto, ending somewhere west of Toronto. I don't know exactly where it ends, but obviously a lot of policy of this type has been well applied in southern Ontario. I think it's important to mention that.

In terms of the south jamming things down into the north, as the member has said, I would remind him that it was his party—and I'm not sure what his position was at the time—that brought in the spring bear hunt. Talk about jamming something down, with zero—zero—consultation, absolutely none, on the back of a napkin in an airport, as I'm told the story goes. But I don't know that for sure.

Speaker, a long list of endorsements as well has been brought into this. What this legislation will do is leave a void. If the member would have perhaps brought something forward that he intended to replace this act with, that would have somehow been better, perhaps we would have given it some serious consideration over here, but what he's going to do is create a vacuum. What mining companies want, what everybody who's interested in northern development wants, is certainty. How has it been working for you so far? Not so well. People want certainty, and we know—the member from North Bay knows as well—that that's what this act provides. That's what the mining companies want. They need the certainty of access to land before they're going to be able to make their investments, before the banks and their shareholders are going to finance exploration.

The implication that somehow this has put the brakes on mining exploration or mining activity in northern Ontario is hilarious. Mining activity in northern Ontario has never been higher. There is $1 billion worth of work going on by juniors in the mining industry in Ontario right now, as was spoken very clearly and publicly about at PDAC just two weeks ago. When that member's party finished in government in 2003, the number was about $200 million. It's gone from $193 million up to $1 billion. Speaker, they need the certainty.

I would say to members as well and to everybody who is interested in this, and hopefully people seriously are, that this bill was consulted on ad nauseam, and I hope that we are careful that we don't turn consultation into the industry. We don't want consultation to be the industry. We consulted extensively. I was on the plane with the member from Timmins–James Bay when we went to Sioux Lookout three years ago. At that point, there were already about five communities engaged. There are five communities finished; eight actively engaged. They want this.

The LUP process that's in the Far North Act provides the road map and the pathway for exactly what we all want to happen: First Nation involvement in what goes

on in their territory so the people who are going to bring the economic development dollars forward know with certainty that when they go there, they're going to be able to continue their work, that their financial investment is not at risk. The worst thing we could do would be to pass this particular piece of legislation, create a void, create uncertainty in the industry, and then where are we again? Back at the starting line.

This legislation has moved it forward, Speaker. It's working, and we need to continue to allow this process to unfold. Most First Nations communities are interested in this. They want to be engaged, they want to be consulted and they want to see this work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's my pleasure to speak in favour of Bill 44 today, a bill that will right a wrong imposed on our northern communities, a wrong that will make economic circumstances in our northern communities ever more dire under a government that blatantly disregards grassroots needs and is utterly disconnected beyond the GTA.

It's important to understand that Bill 44 represents the views of stakeholders who know their communities best. It will repeal the Far North Act, which was imposed from a top-down, Toronto-centric Liberal majority government. This act is another example of why, under the current government, Ontario has dropped to the bottom of Canada and become a have-not province.

The Far North Act cuts off half of the Far North, roughly 225,000 kilometres squared, to resource development—roughly 21% of the province's land mass—and turns it into parks. The total land area of Ontario is roughly 907,000 kilometres squared. Southern Ontario is approximately 102,000 kilometres squared. Double that and you begin to appreciate just how much parkland has been designated and off limits for low-impact mining exploration and sustainable—I stress "sustainable"—development.

The people who pay for it the most are the ones living in our northern communities in sometimes Third World conditions. These communities need to have the same opportunity to develop, albeit sustainably, as those of our privileged southern communities.

Outside of pandering to a few powerful environmental stakeholders, the Far North Act accomplishes little for the province's economy and the much-needed development of our north. For example, Polar Bear Provincial Park, established in 1970, is Ontario's largest provincial park at 23,522 kilometres squared, give or take a kilometre or two. It's located on the western shore of Hudson's Bay. The number of visitors to the park may be as high as 100 per year, although in 2010 it was only 65.

According the press, the nearby impoverished First Nation community sees very little tourism or economic benefit from those 65 to 100 people who come per year. There are no benefits to their economic well-being in having this massive park in their backyard. The remote tourism industry is very small, wage rates are not high and its economic impact will not significantly reduce aboriginal poverty.

There's a kind of irony and arrogance when a few urban ruling elites decided it was their responsibility to block economic development in 20% of the entire province—20%—and that 20% is chronically depressed. There's a wise expression that goes something to the effect that you're only as strong as your weakest member. We must be taking strides in this province to boost the areas that need it the most. We must not sacrifice them for the vanity of impressing a handful of southern stakeholders.

1520

It's important to develop these resources responsibly and sustainably. No one here is advocating the destruction of the environment for economic gain for a few private companies. Rather, it is a few city politicians acquiescing to aggressive, well-funded environmental stakeholders who are not doing their job very effectively and, however, do not represent the interests of the province nor struggling communities living in harsh, sometimes Third World, conditions.

It's clear that this development has positive effects on struggling northern communities that cannot be ignored. Our communities need to be able to grow sustainably without undue harm to the environment. It is the will of the people, and government would have known that if it cared for a moment to consult in a meaningful way with the communities that this would directly affect. This is why it's important to repeal the Far North Act and support Bill 44.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 44 today. I'll start off by first commenting on the minister's comments about the need for these land use plans under the existing Far North Act, and of course, also from members of the third party who mentioned that we need this act for land use plans. But the minister himself contradicted his statement when he said the first land use plan came into effect in 2006, long before Bill 191 was introduced.

As well, Cat Lake had started their process long before Bill 191, so they're wrong on that account.

But I also want to talk about this perceived balance that the third party and the Liberals talked about, that we need to find a balance between the environment and economic development. Well, here's what their balance is, Speaker: Their balance is a quarter-million square kilometres of nothing—zero, no roads, no forestry, no mining, no tourism, no nothing. That's what they consider balanced: a quarter-million square kilometres of nothing. Now, I don't believe that that's a fair balance. I don't think anybody believes zero exploration, zero roads, zero forestry, zero mining is, indeed, a proper balance.

A quarter-million square kilometres and, as we heard through those committee hearings that we went through in the North on, there was only one person who was

consulted. Only one person was consulted by this Liberal government. The World Wildlife Federation's Monte Hummel was the only one who had been consulted.

Speaker, we know that if the north is going to be prosperous—and believe you me, for Ontario to be prosperous, we need the north to be prosperous. We cannot ever be prosperous if we lock away our resources, hide away our resources.

We heard the Premier. Originally, Ontario's problem was the global economy. Then it was the federal guys. Then it was the petro dollar and Alberta that were the problem. I'll tell you, every member in this House should be able to realize that if Alberta conducted itself the way that we do here, they'd be a have-not province as well. So would Newfoundland. So would Saskatchewan. If you're going to lock away all your resources and throw away the key, you are never going to be a prosperous economy. Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland have become robust, prosperous have provinces because they've got the balance right. We don't have the balance right here when we put a quarter-million square kilometres of economic value into the trash can and throw it away with the Far North Act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to say to the author of the bill, I wish I would be able to vote for part of your bill. If you would have said, "I'm scrapping the bill, but before scrapping it, I'm going to replace it with something," we would have been in the ball game because, essentially, that's what we've called for right from the beginning.

Let's put the record straight for everybody to understand: Bill 191, the existing bill, which is the Far North Act, was not supported by First Nations. It was not supported by chambers of commerce. It was not supported by municipalities. It was not supported by hardly anybody in northern Ontario, but First Nations and all of northern Ontario said, "First of all, we need to have some sort of planning regime that gives First Nations the ability to develop their own land use plans and not be overridden by the minister as it is now in this particular act," and that we needed some mechanism to ensure that when First Nations are looking at development, they can automatically get some benefit from it.

Everybody in northern Ontario agrees with that point, if development is going to happen in the Far North in places like the Ring of Fire, we need to have a system that essentially says that First Nations aren't an afterthought, that the First Nations are in the beginning of the discussion and that they're not only able to participate in the project when it comes to jobs, but they're able to develop economically.

You've seen Sarah Campbell, myself, Howard Hampton and others, and the member who's the minister who represents First Nations, talk about the deplorable situation in communities across the Far North as a result of what the federal government doesn't do in those communities. Economic development, by way of mining and forestry or hydro development, is one of the things that is going to bring those communities out of poverty and move them forward.

But what First Nations want is a land use planning process that works for them. My colleague the critic for MNR, Sarah Campbell, raises the point quite effectively. We, as New Democrats, fought the fight against Bill 191 because we thought there was a golden opportunity to develop an act under 191 that would have had the buy-in of northern Ontario. She was right again. It was southern Ontario telling the north what it is that it needed, not talking to northern Ontario about what we could build together.

So we find ourselves in this House today on Bill 44 where my colleague—and I have much respect for him; I don't want to diminish him as an individual because I think Mr. Miller is a very honourable member and works quite hard at what he does. But I cannot vote for a bill that is essentially going to say that we're going to throw out the current act and leave northern First Nations communities across the north without the legislative framework for them to do their land use planning.

They're into the process now. Let me just read one letter from Stan Louttit, who is the grand chief of Mushkegowuk Council. We heard from NOMA, the northern Ontario municipal association, who say they're opposed to Bill 44, and ask us to vote in opposition. I won't read the whole letter because it's a bit long, but it says: "During this time, we have had some significant concerns over the Far North Act and the way it has been implemented. However, we would prefer to see a process to amend the existing act and enter into a dialogue with the Minister of Natural Resources to address key concerns including: respect for the oral treaty, proper funding and resourcing for land use planning, concerns with jurisdiction, respect of approved land use plans and other concerns.

"At this time we will not support Bill 44, An Act to repeal the Far North Act," and essentially advises us to vote against the act.

So my colleague the MNR critic, Sarah Campbell, put forward a motion today that I think is quite reasoned. It says, "Let's engage in a process with First Nations, northern communities, mining associations and others to develop what should be in the Planning Act that meets the needs of First Nations so that they feel comfortable with what's there."

Number two, let's look at what they did in the plan du Nord and let's look at the other parts, which are revenue-sharing and other aspects that were put in the plan du Nord so that development goes forward in a way that benefits First Nations, benefits all northern Ontarians and benefits this province in a way that we're able to get the jobs and prosperity from those particular projects.

To do what Mr. Miller suggests, without replacing the Far North planning act, essentially throws us back to yesteryear. I can tell you—because we know my good friend Chief Elijah Moonias from Marten Falls will not

allow development to happen in his community if he doesn't feel, on behalf of his community, that they're going to get a benefit.

If we don't have some sort of a planning regime that codifies what lands they don't want development on, where development's to happen, what the rules of engagement are, what the rules are when it comes to revenue-sharing and other matters, the only mechanism that will be left to them, if we voted for Bill 44 to scrap Bill 191, would be for the community to say, "Let's do another blockade." Quite frankly, First Nations don't want to have blockades in order to advance the economic interests of their communities; they want to have something at the end of the day akin to what is put in the motion by Sarah Campbell, which essentially says, "Let's develop a process that develops the bill that First Nations need in order to do planning," that they need in order to benefit from mining and other activities on their lands so that all of us here in Ontario can move forward and build a better province.

1530

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Parry Sound–Muskoka has two minutes for a response.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you to all the speakers who have participated this afternoon in debate on this private member's Bill 44.

As the member from Timmins–James Bay pointed out, Bill 191, the Far North Act, which Bill 44 would repeal, was not supported by many groups, particularly in the north: First Nations, chambers of commerce, prospectors, the forestry sector and the mining sector. About the only groups that did support the bill were groups like the World Wildlife Fund, environmental lobby groups that like the fact that half of the north is off limits to the benefit particularly of the people who live in the north and for the First Nation communities in the north. That is certainly the biggest problem I have with the Far North Act.

We have, at this time, the Ring of Fire, which is being developed in the north. That was just discovered in the past 10 or so years. We don't know where the next Ring of Fire will be found, but that Ring of Fire can be a huge benefit for the five or so First Nation communities in closest proximity to it and for places as far away as North Bay, where industry will be supported. It could be a 100-year mine, with thousands of jobs and billions of dollars generated—most beneficial for the people in the north. I don't want to see that economic development being off limits.

I am not opposed to land use planning. I note that the minister stated that the first land use plan was developed in 2006, when the Far North Act did not occur. I think we can learn a lot from Quebec and Plan Nord. Unfortunately, the government so far has not done much to help with the Ring of Fire development, to get the infrastructure—the roads and the power—to the site. There's so much more we would do, but we can start by repealing the Far North Act and then looking forward positively to see real economic activity happen in northern Ontario. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll deal with the vote later.

REDUCING AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE PREMIUMS BY ELIMINATING FRAUD ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES PRIMES D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE PAR L'ÉLIMINATION DES ACTIVITÉS FRAUDULEUSES

Mrs. Mangat moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to encourage the disclosure of and investigate fraudulent activity in connection with automobile insurance claims and to amend the Independent Health Facilities Act with respect to licensee requirements / Projet de loi 41, Loi visant à encourager la divulgation des activités frauduleuses en ce qui a trait aux demandes d'indemnités d'assurance-automobile, visant les enquêtes en la matière et modifiant la Loi sur les établissements de santé autonomes relativement aux exigences applicables aux titulaires de permis.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standard order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand here today and to debate Bill 41, the Reducing Automobile Insurance Premiums by Eliminating Fraud Act, 2012.

Before I turn to debate this bill, I would like to acknowledge the presence of Debbie Thompson, president-elect of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario; Ralph Palumbo, vice-president of the Insurance Bureau of Canada; and Joe Huber, a constituent from my riding who has been a very active advocate about this issue. They are all here today to support this bill.

Automobile insurance fraud is an issue that I have been aware of for some time. Since my first election, I have had countless conversations with the constituents of Mississauga–Brampton South, and the message has been very clear and consistent that automobile insurance rates are too high; something must be done. I believe that elimination of fraud is one of the most important, proactive and necessary steps for achieving lower insurance premiums.

As most of the members in this House know, in 2010 our government introduced a major auto insurance reform package. The purpose was (1) to simplify our auto insurance system; (2) to provide consumers with better choices and more price stability; and (3) to promote a financially sustainable and long-term auto insurance system.

Mr. Speaker, these reforms have produced favourable results. According to the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, there has been a reduction in fraudulent

claims resulting from accident benefits covering medical treatment, housekeeping, various examinations, and caregiver disability income. Of course, this is good news, Mr. Speaker. This is good news. But there is still much more to be done, especially with respect to fraud.

In 2010, I read an article in the Globe and Mail. The article was written by Grant Robertson and Tara Perkins. It was an intriguing article, and that article further intensified my interest in the impact of fraud on auto insurance rates. That was a very informative but disturbing report entitled "How Small-Time Auto Insurance Scams Have Evolved into Big Business in Canada." The article described the machinations of sophisticated and lucrative staged-accident rings across the country, and how honest drivers were being forced to absorb the cost of this criminality by paying higher premiums.

According to that report, out of Ontario's $9 billion worth of auto insurance premiums each year, $1.3 billion—that is, 14.4%—goes to payouts arising from fraud. I repeat: 14.4%. From 2004 to 2009, the number of accident claims rose by 13%. The costs for medical treatments almost more than doubled. The overall costs for examinations and assessments in Ontario increased more than 3.5 times, from nearly $250 million in 2004 to more than $900 million in 2009. Ontario's average personal injury claim is $56,000, which is five times more than any other province in Canada.

Southern Ontario, the largest insurance market in the country, has become a virtual haven for fraudsters. According to a preliminary report of the anti-fraud task force, fraudulent activity—and, in particular, premeditated and organized fraud—has been on the increase, especially in the greater Toronto area.

Mr. Speaker, all perpetrators of auto insurance fraud are working towards a common goal. What is that common goal? Profiting from a crime and stealing from the pockets of innocent and law-abiding citizens.

1540

According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, criminal prosecutors have rarely taken on insurance fraud cases, believing there are more pressing cases to prosecute, namely violent and dangerous crimes. However, the figures have shown insurance fraud has also now become a pressing issue that needs to be addressed.

The intended impact of this bill is threefold. First, it will protect the whistle-blowers who report instances of fraud. Second, it will increase the alertness of our colleges of health professionals to issues of insurance fraud. Third, which is very important, the bill will discourage the activities of unregulated, fly-by-night health facilities.

This bill gives whistle-blowers the required protection without fearing any retaliation such as dismissal, suspension or discipline, acts of intimidation, coercion or harassment, and legal action, unless they acted maliciously or in bad faith.

Under the Regulated Health Professions Act, this bill will provide the same protection to investigators as it provides to whistle-blowers. This immunity to investigators will constitute an important and proactive step in the crackdown of fraudulent auto insurance activity.

This bill also deals with the Independent Health Facilities Act introduced in 1990 to combat the proliferation of unregulated facilities. This bill amends the Independent Health Facilities Act by requiring a licensee of a clinic to be a health practitioner or, in the case of a corporation, by requiring that only a health practitioner may own its shares. Thus, all owners of independent health facilities will now be accountable to the professional colleges that govern them. In this way, this bill aims to crack down on fly-by-night operations with little or no accountability.

Mr. Speaker, now the question is, will this bill eliminate fraud in the auto insurance industry? The answer is no. But the combined effect of the protections and measures provided in this bill will be a first step, and that is an important step forward.

We need to help those who help authorities that investigate fraud, and by protecting whistle-blowers, we will ensure that their actions will not be in vain.

Improving regulation of health clinics is also an important step by ensuring accountability, discouraging fly-by-night clinics and alerting investigators to instances of auto insurance fraud.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to hearing from other members of this House, and I hope they will support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: You know, when I first saw Bill 41 come across my desk, I was really excited to read it because of its title. I thought, "Finally, the Liberals are addressing the issue of auto insurance fraud."

As my party's critic for auto insurance, I've come to understand the scale of fraud in the system. At $1.3 billion, auto insurance fraud costs up to 15 cents of every dollar in premiums we pay. Further, auto insurance fraud has escalated to the point of being classified as organized crime. It involves chop shop auto garages, shady tow truck drivers and networks of phony health clinics.

I have talked with my constituents and premium payers from my riding and across Ontario, and their message is clear: Auto insurance premiums are far too high. The big reason high premiums are there is because of the excessive costs of the system attributable to fraud. The member opposite rightly has acknowledged that fraud is a massive problem that needs to be addressed.

I cracked open the bill and eagerly started reading it, hoping I'd find the silver bullet to this province's auto insurance fraud problem. I was encouraged to read the whistle-blower section of the bill because it's vitally important to have comprehensive whistle-blower protection for those who come forward to be protected. However, as I got past that part of the bill, I became less enthused. This bill, bottom line, is ineffective; it will not reduce fraud and therefore will not reduce rates.

It is clear to me that while the member recognizes the importance of eliminating fraud, she does not have a

good idea of how to do it. I have put forward ideas since I was appointed as critic to help combat fraud, and she has not incorporated any of them.

I always encourage healthy discussion and would gladly have sat down with the member from Mississauga–Brampton South to discuss the contents of this bill. I think Bill 41 would have benefited from a healthy discussion of ideas. After all, that is what is great about this Legislature: the opportunity to exchange and debate ideas in an effort to bring forward good policy that will benefit everyone in Ontario. Sadly, this didn't happen.

There was an opportunity here to align interests and bring forth a truly bipartisan bill with some teeth to it, but unfortunately, the Liberals seem bent on rejecting any such bipartisan efforts.

So why did the member bring this ineffective bill forward? After all, Dwight Duncan told me in response to a question that I asked in December that he was not interested in moving forward with any action on auto insurance fraud until he has received the final recommendations of the anti-fraud task force.

Further, if this truly was the Liberals' silver bullet to fraud prevention, why was it introduced as a private member's bill? If the government was serious about fighting fraud, why wouldn't a cabinet minister bring this bill forward?

The fact that the Liberals have allowed this to go through the private-member route is an acknowledgment that they, like me, feel this bill is ineffective. It is also an indication that they are not really interested in fighting fraud but more interested with placating voters and scoring political points by introducing a bill with the words "fraud prevention" in it, but which lacks the meat to actually accomplish such a goal.

As an auto insurance customer, as I'm sure most of us are in this room, I am insulted by this blatant political ploy. I am interested in improving the system regardless of politics. I would be happy to work with the member. If she's really interested in addressing the underlying problems and not just scoring cheap political points with her constituents, I have some ideas that will really beef up this bill.

For instance, I am a pharmacist and a member of the pharmacy college—a regulated health profession. I know the college investigators have neither the experience nor the resources to investigate fraud. That was never their job, and requiring them to do so puts unfair pressure on them and is a sure way to allow fraud to go undetected.

The best way to investigate fraudulent activity is to have a special unit of the crown attorneys' office—similar to the fraud investigation bureaus in Britain and the United States—that would work with the IBC and be dedicated to the investigation and prosecution of fraud. As mentioned earlier, auto insurance fraud has escalated to the point of organized crime. You need people who are properly trained to investigate that. Health college investigators simply are not.

For the sake of Ontarians, let's take forward one good thing here: whistle-blower protection. Any piece of legislation or policy going forward needs to include such protections. However, unless the rest of this bill is radically overhauled, I cannot in good conscience support it, because supporting it is just a way to score short-term political points. I owe it to the people of Ontario and my constituents to offer more than that, and that is why I will not support this bill.

1550

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: There is a number of serious issues that need to be clarified here. First and foremost, when the member from the party opposite, from the government, indicates that this government conducted a review on auto insurance reform in 2010, let's be clear on what that meant. That meant that services that the consumer received, benefits that the consumer received, went from—two categories: One was $100,000 in terms of benefits for serious injury and $72,000 when it was deemed to be in a secondary category. Those benefits, which were once $100,000 and $72,000, were slashed in half. This auto reform essentially resulted in the consumer receiving half of the benefits they usually received. Furthermore, there was a third category created, which was capped at $3,500. From $100,000 and $72,000, we had a new set of criteria which resulted in benefits of $50,000, $36,000 and $3,500. Essentially, we were paying the same for less than half of the service that we received.

In fact, what happened is, if you look at the overall trend in auto insurance, the auto insurance rates increased, despite the fact that auto insurance companies were paying out far less, less than half. So the attempt to reform the auto industry didn't reform the auto industry in favour of the consumer. What it did is increase the profit margin for insurance companies.

When times are difficult and families are struggling to make ends meet, that's not the correct approach to auto reform. We need to make changes to the auto insurance industry that benefit the consumer, not slash their benefits, not slash what they receive and still increase the rates. That is no auto reform, and that is no auto reform that puts the Ontario people first.

Now, the bill proposed by the member opposite hopes to address the issue of fraud. Fraud is, in fact, a relevant issue, but let's be clear on its impact on those increases that affect the consumer. In the past five years, the auto insurance rate in Ontario has increased 26%. According to the Auditor General of Ontario, the fraud cost, the fraud component of that 26% increase, is between 10% and 15%. What that means is, if we look at the overall cost that is attributed to auto insurance by addressing fraud, if there's a 26% increase in fraud over five years, that's only a 2.6% to 3.9% impact. Essentially, this bill will only affect a person's insurance rate by, at most, 3.9%.

And it can't be a direct translation. It can't be that if you cut out fraud, it will directly result in a savings for the consumer. In fact, the bill has no provision for that. If

indeed the bill is successful—and I doubt that it will be successful, given the fact that it has no real teeth—where is the guarantee that there will be a savings passed on to the consumer? Let's say that it does prevent the 10% to 15% fraud increase or the cost attributed to fraud. How do we know that that savings will be translated to the consumer? How do we know that the consumer will then receive some benefit from this, or will what happens instead be that the insurance companies would now have a 10% to 15% increase in their profit?

Again, that is not a change that benefits the consumer; that is a change that benefits the insurance company. In fact, it looks like there is a trend here. There is a trend that all the reforms on this side of the House are in favour of insurance companies and not in favour of the consumer. The consumers need a break, not the insurance companies.

If we look at the results of a profit measure which will come forward in the next month, I hope, or in the next two months, we are going to see substantial increases in profits for insurance companies, yet we're going to see further increases in rates for the consumer. That is not the direction insurance rates should be going. They need to be going down, not up.

Now, let's look at the actual nuts and bolts of this bill. Again, I actually agree very strongly with the member from from the Conservative Party and the member's remarks in respect to the fact that this bill, on the face of it, looks like it's an attempt to address auto insurance fraud.

But what does it really do? What is it really revolutionizing or what is it really increasing? What additional tools is it providing in terms of addressing fraud? To protect those who come forward to disclose fraud claims: The impact of that on reducing fraud claims is negligible. How can that assure that we can reduce fraud if we protect those who come forward?

It doesn't address the criminal element. It doesn't address the organized crime element. Those are the elements which are very clearly—in terms of those who have reported on this issue—the source of the auto insurance fraud, and that's not addressed by this. There is no attempt to address the root cause. This is simply a superficial gloss that seems to be addressing the issue but has no substance to it.

Providing a mechanism to investigate health professsionals—I mean, all health professionals are governed by their regulatory bodies. Much like any other profession, there are regulating bodies. That already exists. What more is this bill providing in terms of tools—concrete tools—that will actually address the issue of auto insurance fraud?

Mr. Speaker, I think we need to re-evaluate our position with respect to auto insurance. We need to look at our goals and listen to what the people are saying. I've heard time and time again from my constituents that they are simply moving from one street to another street and seeing 50% increases in their insurance rates, just by moving from one street to another. I've heard stories from my constituents that simply by being involved in an accident where they're not at fault, where they're the victim of an accident, they are now being told that they no longer have coverage.

We're seeing a vast amount of injustice, of unfairness going on in this industry. That's what we need to address. We need to help the people of Ontario. Again, there has to be a priority shift. Is our goal here to ensure that insurance companies increase their profit margins, or is our goal here as elected officials to represent the interests of the people and to ensure that they have the means to afford their insurance? That should be our goal. Our goal has to be the best interest of the people of Ontario.

If we look again, the trend that's going on with this government is an upward trend—like I said before, a 26% increase in auto insurance rates. There have been more than half of our benefits slashed, in terms of the consumer, and there are no steps to ensure that there will be some savings passed on to the consumer. That's where we need to shift our priorities.

I presented a bill in this House. I've asked this question a number of times and all of my focus has been on addressing the concerns of the people.

First and foremost is the geographic discrimination that occurs. This is not addressed by the member opposite's bill, and that is something that's a pressing concern: the fact that simply by living in Brampton, simply by living in Malton, simply by living in Rexdale or in York, your rates are sometimes double to 2.5 times higher than other residents who live in neighbourhoods such as Rosedale or Lawrence Park. That's simply unfair. That's what we need to address. That's a direct approach to improving the auto insurance industry, the auto insurance risk assessment to pass on some savings to consumers.

And there are those out there that need to have their rates higher. Those who are committing fraud themselves, those who are unsafe drivers, those who are dangers to the public: They deserve an increase. That makes sense. But why is it that someone who has an absolutely clean record, who is driving a reasonable car—

Interjection: A BMW.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: A person who has experience—and you know what's very interesting? The member opposite, I commend him for bringing that comment about the BMW. It's very troubling that this side of the House, their response to an issue that affects Ontario people, the fact that they're paying high insurance rates—the response from this side of the House is what type of car a member drives. That shows a complete lack of respect for this true issue, the true concern of the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Who cares what car I drive? Is that your response to the people of Ontario who say that their insurance rates are too high? Shame on all of you. Shame on all of you for saying that. I don't care—it doesn't affect me—but it affects the people of Ontario.

1600

It shows your lack of respect, it shows your lack of regard and it shows your lack of concern for their plight. It is a plight. It's a plight that people in this province are paying the highest auto insurance in the country. It's not just in Brampton. The fact that in Ontario we are paying the highest auto insurance rates in the entire country is simply wrong. Why is that the case when we have the highest population? We have the highest population in Ontario. Why are we paying the highest auto insurance rates? It's because this government has not taken the right initiative to ensure that consumers in this province are protected, and that needs to change. I, for one, am someone who will stand up for the people of Ontario and ensure that this auto insurance industry does reflect the needs of consumers and protects their interests.

I recognize the concerns that are raised by the member opposite that auto insurance fraud is a legitimate concern and must be addressed, and we will work with the industry to address that. The industry has great insight into this problem. The member opposite has some great insight into some real tools, some real substance to improving this and to rectifying this fraud issue. But in addition to that strategy, the more important strategy in this circumstance is to ensure that we have a priority shift toward the needs of the consumer and toward reducing the overall cost of auto insurance, and making the auto insurance system more transparent, more fair, more just and more affordable.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to be able to share my time with the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to support this bill. It actually speaks to three areas within the insurance industry. It doesn't claim to be a comprehensive approach to reforming auto insurance—I think that's an important issue to keep in mind.

I know and understand the issue around postal codes, but it's not a quick-fix solution. Because if you rationalize that, that means that in areas such as northern Ontario they will pay significantly higher to pick up the costs from those areas in which fraudulent claims do happen, and that too can be blatantly unfair. So you need to look at this in a far more comprehensive approach than a quick-fix solution.

I want to share with you some figures, when I asked about the issue of fraudulent claims. In 2009 alone, $9 billion was paid out in claims and $1.3 billion was paid to fraudulent claims, and over $3 million alone in the GTA to fraudulent collision claims in 2010. So obviously there is a very significant concern here and something we need to be able to address.

The insurance industry has been doing that. We need to do some things, because the penalties can be, and are, loose here, but we're working together. What this bill is trying to address is how we can address at least three of the very significant issues that are going forward.

So you look at what the industry has had to deal with. In fact, they've had to deal with a change in the comprehensive benefit plan, which we spoke about. As you know, it's one of the most rich or the richest plan in Canada. It was changed from 2000; in the early to mid-1990s, it was considerably higher. It has been changed. It is making a difference. It's not alone.

Certainly, the insurance industry has had to deal with the change in the world markets as well. That's been a significant challenge for them. Automobiles themselves today, regardless of what you drive, are far more expensive to fix than they were in the past. That too leads to significantly higher costs.

What this bill is trying to do, Mr. Speaker, is just address some of those issues, not absolutely everything. It's a really good beginning. If there are amendments and opportunities to make this bill better, that's the reason you send it to committee, where we can have a really good kick at the can on how we can make things much better.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm pleased to stand today and support the Reducing Automobile Insurance Premiums by Eliminating Fraud Act, 2012, which has been introduced by my colleague the member from Mississauga–Brampton South.

I know personally that she has been working for a long time on this issue, and I really applaud her for bringing this forward. I also thank all the other members who have contributed to this, including the members from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Bramalea–Gore–Malton and Etobicoke Centre.

The issue of affordable insurance is of paramount importance to my riding of Mississauga East–Cooksville, and I can tell you that this is a welcome bill for somebody like me and the people in my riding.

The measures in this bill are excellent measures aimed at reducing and discouraging fraud. As we all know, 14 cents on the dollar of our premium goes because of the level of fraud in Ontario, so this is a step in the right direction by providing whistle-blower protection to complainants and investigators, as well as discouraging fly-by-night health facilities.

I was a little disappointed that most of the criticism from the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London was the fact that, first, this is not a silver bullet. Well, grow up, because nothing in life really is a silver bullet; it's about incremental change.

Second, I was really disappointed that he would be so dismissive of an act that's being introduced by a private member's bill, because I really believe that that is a disservice to democracy, and I can only assume that he is also dismissive of bills being introduced as private members' bills from his side of the House. That's something to think about, because to attack a bill not on its merits but by who is introducing it is really a disservice to our democracy.

And finally, all I want to say is, this is a welcome step. It has got some of the ingredients that we need to fight fraud, and I know that constituents in my riding will be very, very pleased with this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I do want to speak for a couple minutes on Bill 41. I just have a couple of things to say. The couple of reports which I've reviewed—and our critic did a marvellous job—this interim report on fraud that has been with the government since just before Christmas—they've had time to review it—and the auto insurance regulatory oversight committee as well.

We all know that there's a lot of fraud within the system. The Insurance Bureau of Canada—I thank Ralph Palumbo for being here—has put forward some very good ideas, kind of suggesting why Ontario is lagging. They've suggested increasing the criminal and civil penalties; and a joint auto insurance industrial fund to look at investigations.

Here's the issue: Yes, we need action on fraud. Yes, we need action on whistle-blower legislation. This bill is an ineffective attempt to solve a serious problem, and they've given it to a Liberal backbencher who has really no standing whatsoever—no discredit to her.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: No discredit to her. It's not personal.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, what I mean by that—this is an important public policy, and what they've done is given it—they're using you. You belong in the front bench. You can do the health job.

My point here really is—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member from Durham, please restrict your comments to the bill.

Mr. John O'Toole: —this is a serious matter. There are reports on it. Why isn't the Minister of Finance, who's in charge of this, standing here, protecting the people of Ontario?

Insurance, Mr. Speaker, is a tax. It's required, it's mandatory to have it and it's regulated by the province; therefore, it's a tax. We're paying more and getting less—typical Liberal policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very happy to speak to this issue. I want to acknowledge the member from Mississauga–Brampton South for bringing it forward, because I think she understands how complex auto insurance is, how complex the issue of fraud is, and that there are no silver bullets, as the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London seemed to indicate.

We have brought in a lot of reforms, which the member for Mississauga–Brampton South spoke about, but we haven't systematically addressed the issues of fraud in the system. That's why, in July 2011, we appointed the Ontario Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force, led by Fred Gorbet. I just want to go over the interim findings because I think it's relevant to this discussion.

The task force interim findings are these: The task force is convinced that fraud is a large and growing factor in the Ontario marketplace; secondly, that there's an unexplained and widening gap between the cost of accident benefit claims and numbers that we could normally expect to move in parallel with active benefits costs; thirdly, the cost increase appears to be concentrated in the GTA—a number of members have spoken to that anecdotally, but I think it's good to find out whether that actually is the case, and certainly, in my constituency, it's a question about why that is happening, and so the anti-fraud task force has identified that that is the case; and finally, that the fastest-growing parts of auto insurance fraud are premeditated and organized fraud rather than opportunistic fraud.

So what the report points out is that we need to have better prevention, detection, investigation and enforcement, regulatory practices, and consumer engagement and education. That's where this bill comes in, Mr. Speaker.

1610

What this bill does is it opens a dialogue. It starts a discussion about a badly understood area that I think we all need to know more about. It starts to help us have that discussion with the broader public, because we know fraud costs individuals and the public a lot of money. We've got to get at the root of it. There are initiatives that are being taken, but we know that more needs to be done. This bill would encourage individuals to come forward and is a step towards a public education process. That's why I think it's important. Auto insurance fraud is a complex problem. I think that Bill 21 is a very good first step, and I commend the member for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: I think we all agree that we have to make insurance fraud an issue in the province of Ontario. I do agree with my colleague from Durham. I mean, this is something that should come forward as a government bill. You take a look at Bill 41, and I think our critic here on the PC side has noted quite well that it's pretty much a toothless and ineffective bill as it stands right now. There are a lot of things that could be included in this bill, and I just don't think that it does anything.

Many insurance stakeholders that I talked to in Prince Edward–Hastings described the bill as well-intentioned and toothless; that's the way they described it to me, as well. The good news, I guess, is that we do have some committees here that could possibly add some meaning and give it the tools that it needs to address insurance fraud.

I think everyone here is understanding that there is a real problem with insurance fraud, but this government hasn't seemed to realize that yet at all. It's another example of where the Premier just continues to kick this can down the road, and we've heard that several times regarding this government. They just don't want to tackle this subject seriously for some reason.

The Canadian Coalition Against Insurance Fraud stated that a third of all accident and benefit claims and a quarter of all bodily injury claims are from automobile accidents that have some element of insurance fraud. It's obviously a huge issue, and it's something that I think the House needs to take a little bit more seriously. We need a serious crackdown on these staged collisions. These fake accidents, as we've heard several times today, are a huge reason for the increased cost of insurance fraud claims here in the province of Ontario.

This is by no means a perfect bill. As many of my more experienced colleagues, like the member from Durham, have pointed out, there are rarely any perfect bills that come along. Most of them that do come along come from this side, I would tend to say.

I think that the members from the third party and definitely the members of our caucus and our critic have made some good points. There is no silver bullet, but there are many things that could be included to make this bill far more effective if it does make it to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I don't even know where to begin. So many ridiculous things have been said.

First of all, the members opposite should actually get to know the member who brought this bill forward. You don't know her, you don't know her life story, and you don't know very much about her and why she does this. To refer to someone as a Liberal backbencher of no standing is one of the most insulting things I've heard—

Interjection: Shameful.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —and shameful things from a party that just spent 10 minutes lecturing us on their new open, non-partisan, collaborative approach. That's unfortunate.

I would be very interested in sitting down with the member opposite to hear his ideas. There are people from the industry here whose—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. The member from Elgin–Middlesex, if you want to heckle, you'll have to go to your seat.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Stop the clock. It's been really quiet all along, and everybody has been listening. I'd ask for some order.

Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

People from the industry have been asking for this for quite a long time. We have a task force coming out with a comprehensive report. This does two things—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Then put a government bill out.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You know, I didn't interrupt you when any of you were speaking. I'd like the same courtesy back. Thank you.

There are folks from the industry—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Renfrew, please come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, there are people here from the industry who are asking for this bill. They think the whistle-blower legislation is particularly important right now. This is an industry that also thinks that the health care profession should also have a regulatory officer. These are very reasonable, practical things that are thoughtful, that represent the diverse experience—the life experience—of someone who actually understands business and hasn't spent their entire life in politics.

This is an industry that has lost about $2 billion in the last few years, to my friends in the NDP. There's not any net profit in auto insurance right now in Ontario, and fraud is one of the problems. This is something the industry thinks—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It is.

I haven't heard one argument that either of these things are not useful at all. Everyone agrees the industry would very much like to see this. I trust the business leaders which represent the large insurance industry, as well as small entrepreneurs, think this is effective. I trust their experience.

The member has spent a lot of time talking to her constituents who are particularly concerned about this. You've got absolutely nothing to lose. If there was truly a spirit of collaboration here and non-partisanship, this should fly through quite quickly. The worst thing you have to lose: If it doesn't work, we're no further ahead.

We had this talk about the diminishment in benefits. It's the small-injury cap that is down to $3,500, not overall. That's the challenge.

I'm going to leave a little bit of time for my friend from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Again, if there are better ideas in the party opposite, bring them forward. Hopefully your bill will get more respect than you're giving my colleague.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: I am pleased to speak to private member's bill, Bill 41, sponsored by the Liberal MPP for Mississauga–Brampton South.

Waterloo region, as you may know, has a long and proud history in the financial services and insurance industry. Today, Waterloo region is home to 12 major insurance companies like Sun Life, Manulife, Economical, Equitable, Waterloo Lutheran and Gore Mutual. Together, the major companies and the many insurance brokers employ over 7,000 people in our communities. Like the tech sector, this industry is a major contributor to our local economy.

Unfortunately, the McGuinty government sat back and watched as Ontario became home to the highest auto insurance rates in Canada and even North America. Bill 41, like most bills from the government benches, has a great name, but unfortunately the contents of this bill will do nothing to reduce auto insurance rates in Ontario. It's no secret that insurance fraud is hurting consumers, brokers and companies in Ontario. Unfortunately, this

bill falls well short of achieving its goal of reducing auto insurance rates by eliminating fraud.

I want to highlight the many problems with this bill. For example, downloading costs to health professionals and eventually taxpayers by requiring health colleges to hire investigators—this will not be effective because health colleges are non-experts in investigating fraud; forcing health practitioners to own health clinics will create a significant barrier, forcing many to leave Ontario because they just can't afford to stay; and the lack of a strong investigative unit means that whistle-blowers' complaints will not be adequately addressed. Over time, this will result in people choosing not to come forward.

I want to get auto insurance rates under control. I want to crack down on the insurance fraud that's hurting consumers and businesses. Unfortunately, this bill, as written, will not achieve these goals, which is why I cannot support it.

That said, I want to encourage the member from Mississauga–Brampton South to work with us in the opposition parties to address the weaknesses in this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: Just briefly, Mr. Speaker; it's sort of very sad to see the members opposite slagging private members' bills. I think many good bills come from private members on both sides. They say, "Well, the government should do it," but I think there's a lot to be achieved by supporting private members' bills. I know many good ones have come through this House, so it's very important to pay respect to private members' bills.

1620

With this bill here, the key component is to understand that it is an attempt to try and deal with pervasive fraud, and I'm shocked that the Conservatives are saying they're not going to support it because it's an attempt. Well, we've got to start, and this is a very good start. The key message here is that, in Ontario, the average accident benefit claim is about $50,000. Across the rest of Canada, the average benefit claim is $10,000. That's the crux of the issue. Why is it $40,000 less in most other provinces than it is in Ontario?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

The member from Mississauga–Brampton South, you have two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank my colleagues for their comments on my bill: from Etobicoke Centre, Mississauga East–Cooksville, Eglinton–Lawrence, Don Valley West and Toronto Centre. I would also like to thank the members of the opposition from Elgin–Middlesex, Prince Edward–Hastings, Kitchener–Conestoga, Durham, and Bramalea–Gore–Malton. But I always wonder why the member from Durham has nothing else to do, nothing productive and positive, than to look at who's being used and who's not being used. Shame. It's a matter of shame.

The opposition's record on auto insurance is mixed at best, Mr. Speaker. It is mixed at best. When the official opposition were in power, the inflation rate was 18% and the insurance went up by 45%. The NDP wanted to institute a system of public auto insurance and then backed down. They don't know what to do and what not to do.

The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton is talking about territorial rating. He's playing divisive politics, pitting one group of people against the other. It's dangerous, Mr. Speaker; it's dangerous. I'm proud to stand on my government's record. We are walking the walk, and we are talking the talk. This bill is an effective bill in the area of ending fraud and lowering rates and opening up the dialogue about fraudulent claims and educating the public on fraud. I hope all members support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted just to correct my record. In my haste to make sure that my colleagues had time to speak, I called this Bill 21, and it's actually 41. So I just wanted to correct that record.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

AFFORDABLE ENERGY AND RESTORATION OF LOCAL DECISION MAKING ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE ET LE RÉTABLISSEMENT DE LA PRISE DE DÉCISIONS LOCALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 19, standing in the name of Mr. Hudak.

Mr. Hudak has moved second reading of Bill 42. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a loud no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

I think the nays have it. We will deal with the vote at the end of other business.

FAR NORTH REPEAL ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 ABROGEANT LA LOI SUR LE GRAND NORD

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, has moved second

reading of Bill 44. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the notion, please say "nay."

I think the nays have it. We will deal with the vote at the end of regular business.

REDUCING AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE PREMIUMS BY ELIMINATING FRAUD ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 VISANT À RÉDUIRE LES PRIMES D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE PAR L'ÉLIMINATION DES ACTIVITÉS FRAUDULEUSES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Mangat has moved second reading of Bill 41.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I heard a nay. In my opinion, the ayes have it. Bill 41 is carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to general government.

Is that the pleasure of the House? Carried.

AFFORDABLE ENERGY AND RESTORATION OF LOCAL DECISION MAKING ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR L'ÉNERGIE ABORDABLE ET LE RÉTABLISSEMENT DE LA PRISE DE DÉCISIONS LOCALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1626 to 1631.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All members take their seats. We'll take the vote on Bill 42.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please stand and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Murray, Glen R.
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Natyshak, Taras
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Orazietti, David
Bisson, Gilles	Jaczek, Helena	Piruzza, Teresa
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Prue, Michael
Broten, Laurel C.	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Campbell, Sarah	Leal, Jeff	Singh, Jagmeet
Cansfield, Donna H.	MacCharles, Tracy	Sorbara, Greg
Chan, Michael	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Coteau, Michael	Marchese, Rosario	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crack, Grant	Mauro, Bill	Taylor, Monique
Damerla, Dipika	McMeekin, Ted	Vanthof, John
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Milloy, John	
DiNovo, Cheri	Moridi, Reza	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 36; the nays are 49.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The motion is lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Please open the doors for 30 seconds.

FAR NORTH REPEAL ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 ABROGEANT LA LOI SUR LE GRAND NORD

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll now take the vote on Bill 44. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until counted by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please stand and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	DiNovo, Cheri	Moridi, Reza
Bentley, Christopher	Duguid, Brad	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Natyshak, Taras
Bisson, Gilles	Hoskins, Eric	Orazietti, David
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Piruzza, Teresa
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Prue, Michael
Campbell, Sarah	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Cansfield, Donna H.	Leal, Jeff	Singh, Jagmeet
Chan, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Sorbara, Greg

Chiarelli, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Coteau, Michael	Marchese, Rosario	Takhar, Harinder S.
Crack, Grant	Mauro, Bill	Taylor, Monique
Damerla, Dipika	McMeekin, Ted	Vanthof, John
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Milloy, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 36; the nays are 50.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Ms. Witmer assumes ballot item number 23 and Mr. Yakabuski assumes ballot item number 27.

ANNUAL REPORT, PROVINCIAL ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the 2010-11 annual report of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

Orders of the day?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until Monday the 26th at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1639.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margarett R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Grant Crack, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Bob Delaney
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Teresa Piruzza
Bob Delaney, Victor Fedeli
Cindy Forster, Monte McNaughton
Yasir Naqvi, Teresa Piruzza
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: David Zimmer
Sarah Campbell, Michael Coteau
Joe Dickson, Rosario Marchese
David Orazietti, Laurie Scott
Todd Smith, Jeff Yurek
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przezdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Bill Mauro
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Donna H. Cansfield, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Shafiq Qaadri
Laura Albanese, Teresa J. Armstrong
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Paul Miller, Rob E. Milligan
Shafiq Qaadri
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Gilles Bisson, Donna H. Cansfield
Steve Clark, Garfield Dunlop
Jeff Leal, Lisa MacLeod
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Reza Moridi, Jerry J. Ouellette
Liz Sandals, Jagmeet Singh
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Michael Coteau, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Ted Chudleigh, Dipika Damerla
Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Ernie Hardeman, Tracy MacCharles
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 26 March 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 26 mars 2012

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to be here today. I would like to welcome, from the great city of Ottawa and the even greater riding of Nepean–Carleton, Councillor Doug Thompson, a former colleague of former mayor Bob Chiarelli, former city councillor Phil McNeely and former city councillor Madeleine Meilleur, who sits directly across from me. He's here today to support the horse racing industry in Nepean–Carleton.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to welcome some special guests. The parents of the member from Scarborough Southwest—my aunt and uncle—Zia Italia and Zio Tonino Berardinetti are here. Also, all the way from Manfredonia, Italy, visiting Ontario, where they used to reside, are Franco and his beautiful wife, visiting from Manfredonia. I'd like to welcome them.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I wonder if you would help me welcome the Ontario Provincial Council of the Catholic Women's League of Canada. We're joined here today by president Marlene Pavletic, Betty Colaneri, Shari Guinta, Colleen Randall and, from Kingston, Ontario, or at least from the Kingston area, Anne Madden. I wonder if you would welcome them, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to welcome the family of page Emily Chalmers, from Don Valley West, here today: Anna Stabinski, who is Emily's grandmother; Bernardo Stabinski, Emily's grandfather; and Riley Chalmers, Emily's brother. Welcome.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure today to welcome to our chamber Des Hammill. Des is the father of my right hand, my EA, Ashley Hammill, and he's here all the way from PEI. Welcome.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Today we have Cathy Dueck, who is the manager of landscape programs with the Peterborough Green-Up; Axel Tscherniak, who is the executive director of Peterborough Green-Up; Vern Bastable, who is the urban forest co-ordinator of Peterborough Green-Up. They're here today at Queen's Park for the Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm pleased to introduce representatives from the Green Infrastructure Ontario Coalition here today in the east members' gallery. We have Steven Peck, Janet McKay, Deb Martin-Downs, Paul Ronan, Liat Podolsky and Christopher Holcroft. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to invite members to their reception starting right after question period at 11:30 a.m. in committee room 2.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome Mr. and Mrs. Amir Khosravani, visiting from Iran.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'd like to welcome a former student of mine from St. Michael's College School, whose uncle was Father Ed Ronan, who taught me. Paul Ronan is here all the way from beautiful Colgan, Ontario, the potato capital of the world.

M^me^ France Gélinas: It is with much pleasure that I'd like to introduce our health researcher, Mrs. Miriam Barna, with her mother, Laura Alper, and her grandmother Rose Alper, who is also our ultimate go-to when we have a serious question on health promotion. Rose Alper is the person who has all the answers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no further introductions, it is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROVINCIAL DEBT

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier: Last week, you were quoted in a Toronto Sun story saying that Ontario's debt level "isn't that bad." You said it's at an "acceptable level."

Premier, let me put this into perspective for you. It took 23 Premiers 136 years to accumulate our first $140 billion in debt. You, sir, are going to double that to $280 billion by next year. So when you say our debt level isn't that bad, do you mean that you're just getting started?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We look forward very much to presenting the budget in this House tomorrow. We'll be speaking to debt issues, deficit issues, funding levels for our schools and our health care. We'll describe in quite some detail where we believe that we can find some savings. We'll talk about some of the projects that we think it's important to continue with and others that we should put on hold. I look forward to doing that in this House.

But it's been said, Speaker, that a budget is more than just an economic statement; it's a statement of our values. The values that inform our budget will be those shared by the people of Ontario. They want us to protect

the gains that we've made in their health care, they want us to protect the gains that we've made in their education, and they want us to build a strong foundation for jobs and growth. That's exactly what our budget will do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, our position is one of values, one that says you can only spend within your means, that you can only buy as much government as you can afford and that we need to balance the books in the province of Ontario.

We say that, Speaker, because that's also a jobs plan. One thing we've learned is that higher levels of debts chase jobs out of our province. They chill investment; they chill job creation. The Ontario PC Party wants to see an Ontario that's strong, that's vibrant, that's creating jobs. That means getting spending under control.

So Premier, I'll ask you again. You said Ontario's debt level is not that bad. You said it's an acceptable level. I'll remind you that you've added on more debt than from John Sandfield Macdonald to Premier Ernie Eves combined. Can you tell us today, Premier, are we actually going to be on track to doubling our debt or tripling it under Premier McGuinty?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague a little bit of our record that he might not care to reflect upon. We've eliminated a $5.6-billion deficit that we inherited, Speaker. We then balanced our budget three times in a row. I'll remind my honourable colleague that we keep exceeding our fiscal targets. I'll remind him of that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's where I want it.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: A couple of other important facts that are worthy of our shared recollection: Ontario spends the least in the country on a per capita basis. We also employ the fewest public servants per capita in the country.

There is more work to be done. I share that imperative with my honourable colleague, Speaker, but I think it's important that we do it in the right way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, Speaker, this just reinforces my point. When I hear the Premier make his argument that Ontario spends the least of the rest of the provinces, it just shows he doesn't understand the big hole he has dug us into. He doesn't seem to understand that we have a spending problem, not a revenue problem.

I want to say, Speaker, that I was proud to be part of the PC government that brought in five consecutive balanced budgets and had the biggest debt repayment in the history of the province of Ontario. As a result, Ontario had one of the best debt-to-GDP—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I was going to make an attempt to get the other side quiet, but the heckling is happening when I'm trying to get them to be quiet—and on the other side. It goes both ways. Allow the question to be put.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker. Again, we had the biggest debt repayment in the history of the province, at $5 billion.

Premier, let me ask you a very simple, straightforward question—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —you approach these issues. Premier, are we in such significant debt because we've spent too much money or because we don't get enough revenue? What do you truly believe?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, my honourable colleague says he takes some pride in their government's record with respect to balancing the budget. I again remind him that he left Ontarians a $5.6-billion hidden deficit. We had to pass a new law that says you can't hide deficits anymore; you've got to be very transparent.

I say to my honourable colleague as well that the approach that they brought was, for example, to cut social assistance rates by 22%. That's not an approach we're prepared to take. We are not prepared to balance the budget on the backs of needy families and the backs of our children. That's not an approach we're prepared to take.

Having said that, I'm very confident our budget will be informed by the right choices, will protect health care, protect education and lay a strong foundation for jobs and growth.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: It continues to concern me that you don't seem to understand that you have a spending problem here in Ontario. Your approach has been to try to get more revenue, and all we've seen in your budget leaks today, quite frankly, Premier, are tax grabs or temporary delays, one-year postponements, gradual phase-ins. Sir, that's not going to cut it when we're heading towards a $30-billion deficit. We're heading towards tripling the provincial debt.

So, Premier, no more one-offs, no more papering over the problems, no more trying to fill up the cracks and no more blaming the federal government for the problems you've created. Let me ask you directly: Will we actually see across-the-board spending reductions tomorrow instead of just simple postponements and delays of the tough decisions?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I say to my honourable colleague that there will be no reckless, thoughtless, across-the-board cuts, in keeping with the good advice we got from the Drummond commission in that regard.

I say to my honourable colleague he's interested that we pursue, in an aggressive way, cuts to government spending. I'm very interested in seeing the look on my honourable colleague's face and those of his colleagues

when we stop some capital projects. I'll be very interested in getting their reaction at that point in time, Speaker.

We're no longer going to fund horse racing in Ontario. My honourable colleague has a specific problem with that as well. We are going to be selling off some of our office buildings. Again, it would be nice to have the support of my honourable colleague in that regard.

Some capital projects, as I say, will be delayed; others will be stopped. Those are very specific areas where there will be some expenditure savings. I look forward to receiving my honourable colleague's support in all those areas.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, you're reinforcing my point. All you've announced to date are tax grabs or temporary postponements. You mentioned capital projects: You're going to simply postpone those. You mentioned the child tax benefit: You're just going to simply phase in a spending increase. You're going to have one-time sell-offs of government buildings and then rent them back when, in reality, you need to shrink the footprint. You need to reduce the size and cost of government. That's the way of balancing the books in the province of Ontario.

I'm very concerned here. You don't seem to understand you have a spending problem. You're going to delay capital a little bit, but your operating costs are going to increase. So I understand correctly, Premier, that you will continue to spend on the operating side. You mentioned "reckless" and "thoughtless." It is reckless and thoughtless to run up the debt to continue the operating increases that are mortgaging the future of our children and grandchildren.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the advice offered by my honourable colleague, but I think it would be fair to categorize it as rather high-level rhetoric.

Here's a specific, Speaker: We can save $375 million every year if we put an end to our subsidies for horse racing in Ontario. I am encouraging my honourable colleague to stand with us in that regard so that, together, we can lend continuing support to health care and education. That's a choice, Speaker—and by the way, that means rural health care and rural education.

Education and health care help all our families; horse racing helps a few. We've got to make some choices that benefit all our families in all parts of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, Premier, there is a superficial, if not supercilious approach you're taking on a serious issue in the province of Ontario, and that's that we're heading towards a $30-billion deficit.

Premier, I'll say again: All I've seen from you are revenue grabs, which tell me you think you've got a revenue problem, not a spending problem; or temporary delays, postponements or gradual phase-ins, but you're still taking us over the cliff. When you came into office, our debt-to-GDP ratio was 28%. You've now put it to 38%, and you're heading towards 50%. The reason is, you spend too much. You spend too much on the operating side.

I'll ask you one last time: Will you reverse course? Will you admit you have an operating spending problem and not a revenue problem here in our great province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague again of two incontrovertible, irrefutable facts. As a government, nobody's spending less on a per capita basis than we are here in Ontario. As a government, nobody employs fewer public servants on a per capita basis than we are here in Ontario. So I think it's important for my honourable colleague to understand that.

I would also say that we're not prepared to do what he has been recommending. We will not cut full-day kindergarten. We will not increase our class sizes. We will not eliminate our 30% tuition grant for the benefit of our middle-income and low-income families. Those are important contributors to a growing strength in the province of Ontario, bringing us into an era where we'll be competitive with the best in the world.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The Premier says that Ontario's deficit has got to get under control, and to get it under control, difficult choices have to be made. But people are troubled by the ones he's already making, and last week, we saw a lot of examples.

Families are worried about tough times that we're facing. Does the Premier really think that the CEO pay raises that we saw last week and privatization are putting the interests of families first?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question from my honourable colleague. I'm convinced that she and her party will want to support some of the measures that we will continue to support through our budget: full-day kindergarten—they stand in favour of that, I believe; smaller classes—I believe they stand in favour of that; maintaining 20,000 jobs in the education sector—I believe they stand in favour of that; short wait times—I think they support that; transitioning to greater levels of support for home care—I think they support that as well, Speaker; supporting our 200 family health teams that are looking after 2.8 million patients—I think they support that; supporting our movement to ensure that every Ontarian has an electronic health record; we're at 7.5 million Ontarians so far—I believe they support all those measures, Speaker.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, families are looking for concrete action to protect jobs, to improve health care and to make life more affordable, and they're looking to this government for leadership. What signal does it send when they see that public sector CEOs got raises of up to half a million dollars?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would encourage my honourable colleague to stay tuned for the budget and measures that will specifically address the concern that she is raising.

But I'd say beyond that—I say again—the budget is about choices. Our choice, Speaker, is to ensure that we protect the gains that we have made together in our schools and in our health care. At the same time, I want to ensure that we continue to lay an ever stronger foundation for jobs and growth.

So if there's anything that my honourable colleagues may wish to offer by way of support for those kinds of directions, then we are all ears, and we look forward to presenting this budget, as I say, tomorrow, which will embody the right choices that Ontarians want us to make.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the everyday people who make this province work understand that we're in very tough times, but they also know that Ontario won't get better if they continue to fall behind.

The Premier talks about jobs and growth. Over the last week, in communities across Ontario, people learned that they're going to be losing their jobs. On Friday, it was a decision to privatize Ontario Northland.

Can the Premier explain why Ontario can't afford smart investments that create and protect jobs where they're badly needed, but can afford seven-figure salaries in the public sector and scandalous waste like that that happened in Ornge?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, again, I would encourage my honourable colleagues to stay tuned to the budget. I believe that they will find ample reason to support certainly some of the measures found in that budget, in particular those that continue to provide support to families on social assistance.

I can say this: There will be modest increases in those areas of highest priority—health care, education and social services. I've not talked a great deal about that last one publicly, but there will be modest increases in health care, education and social services. Other areas of government expenditure will either be flatlined or they will see decreases in their levels of funding. But again, it's about recognizing that we can't do everything in the way that we always have, Speaker. We've got to make some choices. We've got to attach priorities, and we're saying health care and education and social services will rank first.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The people I meet around this province are worried about their jobs, if they even have one. They haven't seen the 600,000 jobs that the HST and corporate tax giveaways were supposed to bring. Over the last week, the government has announced plans to kill thousands of direct jobs and privatized job-creating infrastructure like Ontario Northland.

We've proposed real measures to create jobs, replacing corporate tax giveaways with tax breaks that are actually linked to job creation and ensuring that natural resources stay here in Ontario to create jobs.

My question, Speaker, is: Will the Premier try some new ideas to actually create jobs, or can we expect more layoffs in tomorrow's budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I want to remind my honourable colleague that since the recession, nobody has created more jobs in Canada than Ontario—over 300,000 jobs. Last year, we created over 120,000 new jobs.

I say to my honourable—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —my vociferous honourable colleague on the other side that the facts, in fact, demonstrate that the overwhelming majority of those jobs are full-time jobs, and the overwhelming majority of those jobs pay above the average industrial wage in Ontario. We're creating new jobs that are better jobs.

To demonstrate just how important our educational levels are in that regard, last year we lost 9,000 high school-level jobs, but we created some 119,000 new jobs for people with post-secondary education. Those are good, high-paying jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the fact is, we lost 4,000 full-time jobs last month. I guess the Premier forgot about that one.

Household budgets are under pressure like never before. More and more people are feeling like they're falling behind, and over the last week, the government has made it clear that they plan to demand even more from families.

We have made proposals to make life much more affordable in Ontario, like taking the HST off home heating and reviewing our electricity system to eliminate duplication and restore public ownership and accountability in the electric system.

My question is: Will the Premier try some new ideas to make life more affordable, or will we expect, yet again, to have a more expensive Ontario for everyday families in tomorrow's budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'll remind my honourable colleague of two important things about full-day kindergarten: One, it saves a family over $6,000 annually per child in child care costs. Secondly, Speaker, we've just received some new independent information about just how full-day kindergarten is working in Ontario. A comparison between a full-day kindergarten child and a half-day kindergarten child has become very pronounced in terms of the increased abilities in numeracy, literacy and fine motor skills that we're seeing in our children who are in the full-day kindergarten program. So I would ask my honourable colleague to continue to support full-day kindergarten, not only because it gives our families an economic advantage but because it gives all of us a

stronger economic advantage as we build a stronger workforce for the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, families know that we can improve our health care system and save money with smart investments. They were happy to see the government follow the New Democrats' lead by introducing birthing centres in Ontario. But I can tell you, they're very sick of seeing hospital CEOs get yet another round of pay hikes while seniors are being cut off of home care in this province. We proposed measures to improve health care, starting with capping outrageous CEO salaries, Speaker, and taking that money and putting it on the front line. Eliminating waits for home care is another idea. Wait-lists for home care are far too long.

My question to the Premier is this: Will the Premier try some new ideas to improve health care, or can we expect more of the same in tomorrow's budget when it comes to health care as well?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I think there's a pretty long list of innovations that we've introduced into health care in Ontario, the latest being our birthing centres. I'm pleased to have the support of the opposition. I believe both parties support that particular measure.

There also are family health teams. We had none before; now we have 200. These are teams of doctors and nurse practitioners and nurses and physiotherapists and other health care professionals. Together, around the province, they're caring for 2.8 million Ontario patients. Before, we had none, Speaker. We've also got North America's first nurse-practitioner-led clinics. We're very proud of those as well.

So we're open to new ideas. I just say to my honourable colleagues in the opposition that there will be a number of new ideas, of course, to be found in the budget.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Premier. Ontario is in its deepest decline in memory. Not even Bob Rae's spending managed to sink Ontario to the depths that this government has brought us to over the past eight years.

Liberals always avoid taking responsibility for their runaway spending, just like they did in the last campaign, by hiring themselves an economist to give them some ideas on how to get Ontario out of the mess they've created. That economist gave them a blueprint for what must be done if our province is to emerge from the hole that Liberal spending and mismanagement have created.

To date, the Liberals still haven't figured out that they may actually have to do the job that they were elected to do: govern. That means making the decisions that are right for Ontario instead of profitable for the Liberal Party.

When will this government finally admit that it has no plan, that it has no vision? When will they adopt the recommendations that our party has made to balance—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the question. I want to come back to this issue of choices and values. My honourable colleague took the opportunity yesterday to voice his displeasure regarding our decision not to freeze the Ontario child benefit.

1100

The Ontario child benefit is something we're very proud of on this side of the House. It's a Liberal government innovation. We introduced it in 2007. It was $250 at the time. It now meets the needs of some one million Ontario children growing up in poverty, providing their parents with about $100 every month. We've decided that we can't implement the growth in that particular benefit as quickly as we would like, so we're going to take a bit more time to do that.

But again, I would encourage my honourable colleague to rethink the situation. This is something that I think is in keeping with the values that we all share as Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I might say, Speaker, that my displeasure voiced yesterday was with the fact that this Premier, as usual, did not follow the advice of his own economist. For eight years, the McGuinty government has spent Ontario into an almost insurmountable mess: eight years of increasing debt and deficits, eight years of scandals, eight years of avoiding accountability, and the trend continues. The McGuinty government continues to avoid doing the responsible thing and reining in public salaries, and we all know why: They don't want to rock the boat with the unions that support them at campaign time.

Now that the money has run out, now that they've bankrupted Ontario and there's no money left to support their spending addiction, will the McGuinty government finally admit that it is out of steam and out of ideas? Will they implement the recommendations that we put forward repeatedly to balance the budget and get Ontario back to recovery?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That's a lot of anger and a lot of pessimism in one guy, Speaker.

I just can't accept that, obviously. Just a few more facts: We've got North America's biggest auto sector. We have the fastest-growing clean energy sector in North America. We have become the mining capital of the world, with incredible opportunities. We had our best year ever last year in mining, Speaker. Our banks—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Good news hurts, Speaker; it hurts.

Our banks are rated the best in the world and our financial services sector is the largest in North America next to New York. Ontario is in the top three in North

America in biotech, information and communication technology, and the film industry, and the list goes on and on, Speaker.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^me^ France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

More than a year ago, the Minister of Health ignored a detailed memo outlining Ornge plans, including the creation of for-profit spin-offs and pay for executives. She also ignored countless whistle-blowers. Then she ignored a draft report by the Auditor General. It seems to me the Minister of Health didn't do her job. Why, Premier, is she keeping it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: As the honourable member is aware, as members are aware, this Wednesday the public accounts committee will have a chance to look into the Ornge situation. Mr. Speaker, they'll be able to learn about the action that has been taken by the Minister of Health. When she found out there was wrongdoing, she took action in terms of dismissing the board and the CEO; in terms of putting forward a new performance agreement; in terms of forensic auditors; and in terms of bringing in the police.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting that the honourable member stands here today and talks about ignoring documentation. We've discovered that the New Democratic Party has failed to provide this Legislature with certain information that on December 15, 2010, the leader of the New Democratic Party as well as the member from Nickel Belt were sent a similar detailed memo from Ornge, outlining the same information.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^me^ France Gélinas: Back to the Premier: What happened at Ornge under this government's watch is staggering. The health minister's latest excuse—that she was too busy during the election to worry about wasted health care dollars—actually points to an even greater level of not doing her job. If regularly ignoring a situation where millions of our health care dollars line the pockets of executives and well-connected insiders does not get a minister fired, what does?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy that the page is right now sending over a copy of this letter, which, as I said, was sent on December 15, 2010. It talks about a $275-million bond; it talks about the helicopter purchase; it talks about the acquisition of the new headquarters; and it talks about for-profit ventures.

Let me quote page five of the letter, Mr. Speaker: "Ornge is ... free to earn other sources of revenue.... Ornge already earns revenue other than government sources and is engaged in businesses other than the delivery of the Ontario system.... These additional sources of revenue ... are growing."

I ask, Mr. Speaker, when the NDP sat on that information for 15 months, why did they not raise questions in this House? Why did they not contact the Minister of Health? It's passing strange, the double standard that the member and her party are bringing to this debate in the Legislature.

GOVERNMENT OFFICE SPACE

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Last week, you announced the plan to modernize the way government manages its office space—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Put the question, please.

Mr. David Zimmer: Minister, last week you announced the plan to modernize the way government manages its office space, including the sale and lease-back of buildings around the province and a big reduction in the amount of leased space here in Toronto. In the private sector, here in Toronto, maximizing the efficient use of leased or owned real estate has long been under way. Those large organizations that have made space management part of their business strategies have seen real impact on their bottom lines.

Minister, is this just a short-term initiative to raise money over the next year or so, or is this a long-term commitment that's going to have results in perpetuity?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member of Willowdale for this very timely question. The answer is both: Our strategy targets generating $500 million for Ontarians up front and creating savings of over $300 million in the long term. This is an approach that is consistent with recommendations of Mr. Drummond and of the provincial Auditor General to dramatically reduce the government's leased space.

In Toronto, for example, the most expensive real estate market in the country, we lease over 100 buildings. Our footprint in the city is 7.8 million square feet, and 4.8 million of that is leased space.

So to the Leader of the Opposition: We're reducing the amount of space we lease in the city of Toronto by one million square feet. That's about the same size as 43 floors of the Toronto-Dominion tower. We are making progress, and we are reducing our footprint.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. David Zimmer: Minister, I know what prime Toronto real estate goes for these days on a per-square-foot basis. If the government leases a million square feet less—or, as you say, 43 floors in the TD tower—that's tens of millions of dollars, year after year, that's not going out the door in rent. It's simply not sustainable, Minister, for a government to be maintaining an average of 250 square feet of space per employee, when in the private sector they manage quite well with about 180 or 200 square feet.

But Minister, what about those regions outside Toronto, where long-owned government buildings are being sold? Do these sales outside Toronto indicate in any way

a change of the government's commitments to jobs and services in those communities outside Toronto?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I want to say that the entire strategy offers long-term benefits to Ontario families who want to see resources focused on their priorities: health care and education. Ontarians expect us to make these kinds of smart, thoughtful and efficient choices. This choice generates money in the near term, savings in the long term, and has no negative impact on government services or jobs in those communities. We have the opportunity now to deliver genuine value for money, injecting some private-sector discipline and investment into our real estate portfolio, with savings and efficiencies going into health care and education.

We're looking at about half a billion dollars to be generated on the front end of this strategy, and an additional $300 million in net savings over the longer term. This is the right approach at the right time.

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AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. I have here two reports issued by the Auditor General. The first one is dated October 2009, and it relates to the eHealth scandal; the second one is the Auditor General's report of this past week relating to the Ornge scandal.

The similarities are striking. In fact, the Auditor General could have used the same template for each of these reports because, in both reports, the Auditor General issues a scathing—scathing—indictment of the Ministry of Health for failing to exercise its oversight over the Ministry of Health.

I want to know from the Premier: Why, in the case of the eHealth scandal, was the former Minister of Health required to step down, and why does he insist on protecting the current Minister of Health?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, this Wednesday the public accounts committee will begin its hearings into the Ornge situation. There'll be an opportunity for members to question the Auditor General—beginning with him—and other witnesses on relevant—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I also think there'll be an opportunity at the committee meeting to discuss what all members of this Legislature knew about the Ornge situation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

I will begin to identify individual members.

Hon. John Milloy: Perhaps, Mr. Speaker, at the committee, they can look into the activities of the member for Whitby–Oshawa, who, we discovered, on May 19 was briefed by Ornge on all of their operations and was given an 18-page deck, outlining all aspects of their operations, including—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. John Milloy: —controversy. Mr. Speaker, what did the honourable member do with that information? Well, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary question?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, my question was for the Premier, and it speaks to the Premier's leadership role and responsibility in this province.

My question was very straightforward: Why is one Minister of Health required to step aside for affairs and the lack of oversight at the Ministry of Health, and why does he protect the current minister? Instead of answering that question, the Premier hides behind his House leader, who doesn't answer the question because it's not his role to answer the question.

I would ask the Premier: Will he at least have the courage to explain to the people of this province why he is failing in his leadership role—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Government House leader.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I look forward to the committee hearings, when perhaps the member from Whitby–Oshawa, or other representatives, can explain that, when she received the information—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville will come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, perhaps they'll explain why the member for Whitby–Oshawa did nothing when she had the briefing—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings will get a warning next time.

Hon. John Milloy: —nothing, that is, except to lobby the Ministry of Health to have an Ornge base established in her riding—a lobby which, in fact, was successful to the point where she was able to attend a press conference in July and have a flashy picture done of her with an Ornge helicopter that I would be happy to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member knows that that would be classified as a prop and it's not accepted in this House.

New question.

SERVICES D'AMBULANCE AÉRIENNE

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M. Michael Mantha: Ma question est au premier ministre. Avec tous les détails concernant les hélicoptères d'Ornge et les implications des compagnies à profit, c'est clair que le vérificateur n'a pas toutes les réponses. Cette Assemblée a passé une motion de créer un comité spécial pour répondre à ce désastre d'Ornge. Est-ce que le gouvernement respectera les décisions de cette Assemblée et mandatera le comité spécial?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: J'aimerais remercier le membre pour sa question.

Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out on a number of occasions already today, this Wednesday the public accounts committee, a committee of this Legislature, will be holding hearings into the Ornge situation. It's a chance for members of all sides of the House to share their involvement in the collection of information over the past year or 18 months.

As I said, the member represents the New Democratic Party. Perhaps the leader and the health critic could come forward and explain why they were given this type of detailed briefing note that they have made no end of in question period over the past number of weeks. They were given such a document in December 2010 and failed to raise questions in this House, failed to bring it to the attention of the Minister of Health or failed to talk to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, Mr. Speaker, my question was to the Premier, not the House leader.

As money lined the pockets of well-connected insiders, the health minister clearly didn't do her job to oversee the public health care dollars. But it was the Premier's top aide that chose to ignore a January 2011 memo from Ornge detailing their shady ventures. Is the Premier refusing to strike an all-party committee on Ornge because he's worried that the answers might lead straight through his office on the second floor?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as I said, the public accounts committee will begin hearings on Wednesday that will last over several sessions. At the same time, the minister has put forward legislation in this House, which, if it passes at second reading, will go to a standing committee of the Legislature. There will be ample time to discuss all aspects of it.

But again, the member stands and makes a big deal out of this memo in January 2011, but he fails to talk about a similar memo which was sent not only to his leader but to the health minister in December 2010, one which outlined all aspects of Ornge operations, including those that have caused so much controversy. I note, Mr. Speaker, that despite having that memo, the NDP failed to raise any questions in this Legislature or make an issue out of the information that they had received.

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. My riding of Ottawa Centre is a vibrant and exciting part of the national capital's artistic, cultural and festival scene. Minister, my community is proud to host many of the great attractions in Ottawa, from major events like the Bluesfest, the jazz fest, the tulip festival and Winterlude, to great venues like the National Arts Centre and the great, new, fantastic Ottawa Convention Centre. These are top-notch attractions in Ontario and beyond and are enjoyed by my constituents, but also welcome people from across the province and from around the world.

Speaker, I'm also very proud of another fantastic event in our city this weekend: the Juno Awards, that are coming back to Ottawa. With many events throughout the week and the awards this Sunday evening, can the minister tell us how the government of Ontario is supporting this signature event—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. I want to thank the honourable member from Ottawa Centre for asking.

I'm proud to say that this week the city of Ottawa, with $381,000 in support from our government, is hosting the 2012 Juno Awards. Honouring achievement in the Canadian recorded music industry, the Juno Awards will generate $5 million in direct expenditures by out-of-town visitors, 4,500 booked hotel room nights, and make a $5.3-million contribution to Ontario's gross domestic product.

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Speaker, the Junos are the most watched award show on CTV in Canada, attracting over 80,000 attendees throughout the week and more than one million television viewers. Our government will continue to support the arts and culture sector in Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: We're very excited for a great weekend ahead in Ottawa with the Juno Awards. This is a great opportunity to showcase our beautiful city and its vibrant cultural scene to our fellow Canadians across the country through a high-profile event like the 2012 Juno Awards.

I'm sure that my constituents, the residents of Ottawa and all Ontarians are pleased to know that our government is supporting this one-of-a-kind annual awards attraction which generates significant economic activity in return.

Could the minister also tell us how our government is helping the music and film sectors to grow and expand into vital new markets and helping to create jobs and economic growth in Ontario? And perhaps he may have an insight as to who may win the best album this year at the Junos.

Hon. Michael Chan: In addition to the Juno Awards taking place in Ottawa, I'm happy to share with you,

Speaker, that just a few days ago, Canadian Music Week and the Canadian Music and Broadcast Industry Awards were held in Toronto. Our government has provided over $1 million in support of these events since 2005, and over $8 million to the Ontario music industry since 2003.

In addition, Speaker, after last year's IIFA weekend and awards, our government invested $90,000 for the Ontario Media Development Corp. in a trade mission to India that, just recently, resulted in a deal between Ontario's Inner City Films and India's Ramoji Film City to co-produce three Bollywood films in Ontario.

Speaker, our film industry experienced a robust year in 2011. We are expecting a great success in—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier, and I hope he will understand that it's time for him to demonstrate a little leadership and actually answer a question.

The Auditor General's scathing report on Ornge has confirmed that your health minister was woefully negligent and ignored numerous warnings that a scandal was brewing. It's not unlike what happened at eHealth, when David Caplan was forced to resign.

Premier, in light of the Auditor General's scathing indictment of the health minister, will you now also ask for your health minister's resignation, as you did for David Caplan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: No, I will not. I've made that clear several times over now.

I understand, and I think we should accept, that there is an important distinction to be drawn here between the public interest—and our government has a responsibility to uphold the public interest—and the partisan interest being expressed by my colleagues opposite.

The question is, what does the public interest demand in these circumstances? I think it begins with an acknowledgement, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I respect my honourable colleagues' right to make the representations that they do, but we differ in this. I think the public interest demands that we take steps—concrete, substantive measures—to bring the necessary oversight to bear and to introduce new legislation, and we've done that, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier: Premier, this past weekend, the public didn't see things differently. They agreed that just as David Caplan did the honourable thing by resigning, this minister should as well. She acknowledged last week that she didn't read the report in September because she was too busy campaigning; yet she made several announcements as minister during the campaign. Apparently, she could write cheques during the election but she couldn't oversee a corrupt agency that was putting lives at risk.

I ask you again, will you do the honourable thing? Just like David Caplan did the honourable thing and resign, will you call upon your health minister to also do so?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, Speaker, it's about the public interest and I guess it's only fair that we might have our differences with respect to how we might represent the public interest in here. But I happen to believe that Minister Matthews has done a very good job in her capacity as the Minister of Health. As soon as she was briefed, she took concrete and substantive measures. She sent in a team of forensic accountants. On the basis of that information obtained because of that exercise, she asked that the OPP investigate. She co-operated fully with the Auditor General. She has introduced new legislation in this House. She has entered into a new performance agreement. She has gotten rid of the CEO and introduced a new board of directors. I think all of those speak to our responsibility to uphold the public interest.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The Ontario Northland Transportation Commission "provides services which are vital to the north's economy and we will not allow it to be privatized"—Dalton McGuinty, March 31, 2003; nice quote. Yet, on Friday, you announced the elimination of the ONTC. Ontario Northland employs nearly 1,000 people. It moves passengers and freight across the north. It's a lifeline for residents in northern Ontario. A lot of them won't be able to travel out of their communities without that service, and that service will not be replaced by private companies. We see that in other parts of the north who have to rely on private companies; they're losing their service. So why, sir, are you allowing your government to turn your back on the residents of northeastern Ontario?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I thank the member for the question, because it is a very, very important issue in northern Ontario. We're not eliminating. The member used the word "eliminating." Nothing could be further from the truth. We're divesting the ONTC from our government's assets. That's not a foreclosure. Elimination is a foreclosure. We are not foreclosing.

What we are doing is going to be building a stronger transportation system for northeastern Ontario for that corridor. We're going to be working with everyone to ensure that we protect the asset, the worth, of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, so that we're able to maximize, in the new model, jobs—project jobs. In fact, we're very confident that as we move forward, we'll be able to increase jobs and get some of the business back.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: We have all heard this song before: Privatize and the world will be yours. Well, we've

had private winter road maintenance in northern Ontario, and believe me, northerners will tell you that it's not better.

The north is once again rising as the powerhouse of the province. The ONTC could and should be part of that. It was Ontario's development road. It could once again be Ontario's development road, right to the Ring of Fire. Once again, why are you throwing away the province's stake, our stake? Why are you killing the Ontario Northland?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: Again, let me reinforce and emphasize—we're not killing the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. The previous government wanted to kill the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. We're not killing. We are divesting the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. We're putting it up for sale to the private sector because we honestly believe that, as we move forward in developing the enormous potential of the economy of northern Ontario, we can best do that with a modern transportation system that includes not only rail; it includes air. It ensures that we're meeting the potential of northern Ontario with a very, very modern transportation system.

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, as you know, aggregates, such as sand and gravel, are vital to Ontario's economy. Aggregates are used to build roads, bridges, hospitals, schools—in fact, much of the infrastructure that all Ontarians use on a daily basis.

While it's true that aggregates are relatively plentiful in Ontario, the State of the Aggregate Resource in Ontario study commissioned by our government shows that rising demand due to population growth, and land constraints, such as in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, could significantly deplete aggregate resources within 20 years. The report also found that there is serious public concern about the social and environmental costs of aggregate extraction and transportation. Can the minister please update the members of this House how our government is managing aggregate resources in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for raising this very important question. I think it's fair to say that all members of this House recognize that aggregate resources are indeed necessary for our economy, to keep building the infrastructure that Ontario relies upon, including roads, bridges and hospitals.

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Because the public sector is the largest purchaser of aggregates in Ontario, we want to ensure adequate supply of aggregates now and in the future at the fairest price for Ontario taxpayers.

I also know, Mr. Speaker, that working together, we can balance our need for aggregates while also ensuring we protect our water and our environment. That is why all parties of this House have agreed to refer a review of the Aggregate Resources Act to a standing committee, a move that was unanimously supported in the Legislature last week. I look forward to working with all the parties in the House to get the review right.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: I'm glad that our government is taking such a balanced approach. I raise this question because a number of my constituents have expressed concerns about the impact of aggregate extraction on our natural environment. In particular, my constituents are concerned that the heightened demand for aggregates may lead to new extraction around the Oak Ridges moraine, where it is currently restricted in order to protect its natural heritage.

Minister, I know that my constituents are not the only ones raising these concerns. I've heard that similar issues have been raised in other communities, especially as it relates to the loss of agricultural lands and impacts on their water.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What specifically is your ministry doing to address these concerns?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want the member from Oak Ridges–Markham and other members to let their constituents know that our government has certainly listened to their concerns and the concerns raised by communities regarding the extraction of aggregates in Ontario and its potential impact on the environment.

I'm certainly very pleased the motion passed last week with unanimous consent, and I do think it's fair to say that we expect each party on the Standing Committee on General Government will be giving it a full review and will come forward with recommendations that will strengthen the act by seeking advice and insight from key stakeholders. The all-party committee certainly provides a wonderful opportunity to ensure that we all have a say in the management of this vital resource. So I'm looking forward to the recommendations the all-party committee brings forward, and as the process unfolds, we're committed to sharing those details of the review with the people of Ontario.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Premier. In relation to the eHealth boondoggle, the auditor reported $1 billion wasted when the computer system was not up and running.

In regard to the Ornge debacle, the auditor reported on $1 billion spent on helicopters that had their windows blown out and rotors falling off, and operational problems that are a concern of the coroner, looking into it as a possible cause of death.

Premier, I would like to know why David Caplan lost his job and Minister Matthews keeps hers. Premier, leadership is about making tough decisions when necessary. Why does Minister Matthews keep her job when you threw Caplan under the bus? I ask you to do the right thing and ask the health minister to resign.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: As I mentioned in this House Wednesday, comprehensive hearings by a standing committee of this Legislature—in fact, chaired by the honourable member's party—will be looking into the Ornge situation. They'll have a chance to learn first-hand of the actions that the minister took when she found out about wrongdoing. She replaced the board and the CEO. She replaced the new performance agreement. She called in forensic auditors. She introduced tough new legislation.

But it will also be an opportunity for the member from Whitby-Ajax to talk about her briefing on May 19 and why, when she was given detailed information about Ornge operations, she failed to ask questions in this Legislature. She failed to alert the authorities or the Minister of Health. All she did, Mr. Speaker, was lobby to have an Ornge base in her riding.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'll once again redirect to the Premier. It's shameful to sidestep. The Premier keeps protecting the Minister of Health from accountability for Ornge, saying she is needed to drive other reforms. With Ornge on her resumé, I would suggest she isn't qualified for the job.

Does the Premier believe there's no one else in his whole caucus who is capable of doing a better job than the current health minister? Premier, it's absurd that you would continue to excuse this type of behaviour. The minister needs to accept responsibility for the misdeeds under her watch.

I ask you again: Why are you not firing her? Will you do the right thing and ask her for her resignation?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. If this happens again, I wanted to make sure that you heard my first comment when the desks were being pounded. In case you didn't hear it because of the noise, I will begin to look at individual members, and I will bring them to order. If they do not come to order, I will name them. I want the minister to answer the question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And if the member from Durham continues to speak while I'm speaking, he will be named.

Interjection: Name him.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I don't need that either.

Start the clock. Minister.

Hon. John Milloy: Like I said, Mr. Speaker, Wednesday's public accounts meeting will be a chance to discuss all aspects of this, including as I've said, why, when the member received the briefing on May 19, the only follow-up she did was to continue to lobby for an Ornge base in her riding. I quote from a letter she sent to the Honourable Deb Matthews, Minister of Health: "As you know, Ornge is planning to relocate one of its air ambulance helicopters to the eastern greater Toronto area in order to enhance its emergency response coverage. Based on my meetings with concerned stakeholders, there are numerous advantages to support introducing this service to Oshawa."

SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. In January 2011, Debbie Sevenpifer was fired as CEO at the Niagara Health System. According to the sunshine list last week, she received a payment of $618,000. But according to the NHS, that's only part of her severance.

Does the Premier think that handing a hospital CEO a six- or seven-digit cheque after being fired is a good use of front-line health care dollars?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to remind my honourable colleague that we have worked very hard on our side to introduce more transparency and more accountability with respect to these kinds of issues. I say to my honourable colleague that the correct kinds of questions she asked herself with respect to this particular issue are the kinds of questions that we of course ask ourselves over here. I say to my honourable colleague as well, I think I've made it public that I've already asked the finance minister to take into account, in the delivery of his budget, specific new measures that we might put in place to deal with these very kinds of issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Whether it's closing local hospital emergency departments like in Port Colborne and Fort Erie, or failing to provide adequate mental health services in Niagara, families in Niagara have watched their health care system erode before their eyes. They're rightly outraged when their health care system hands over over $600,000 in a severance package.

CEO severance packages need to be capped. Why won't the Premier condemn this golden handshake to the Niagara Health System's former CEO?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think the sentiment that I share with my honourable colleague and, I assume, all colleagues in this House is that the message we want to send to those people who have the privilege of serving on our hospital boards is that they need to be accountable to taxpayers, not just in the community but right across the province. They need to understand how important it is that we send as many of those precious taxpayer dollars all the way to the front lines in terms of better services.

We've had some tremendous success in that regard. We have the shortest wait times in Canada. We've built a number of new hospitals; we have expanded close to 100 others. We've made real progress, and the message that we're sending together, I believe, as a Legislature, to all those people who sit on our boards is that it's very important to be mindful of the responsibility they owe to Ontario taxpayers.

VISITORS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I rise on a point of order. It is my distinct pleasure to introduce Jim Boudreau and his

lovely wife, Patti, who are up in the public gallery. Jim is the MLA for Guysborough–Sheet Harbour in Darrell Dexter's NDP government in Nova Scotia. In our recent Ontario election, Jim came all the way up to Kenora–Rainy River to help get me elected, and for that I thank him.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge on a point of order.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, on a point of privilege: I've given your office notice of a matter of privilege I wish to raise. May I proceed?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am aware of the member's writings. I would ask him to give us a brief summary of the point of privilege, and I will hear the member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to summarize my notice that I gave your office earlier this morning. Pursuant to standing order 21(c), I provided the Speaker with the required written notice of a point of privilege that I'm raising.

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During question period of Thursday, March 22, I heard multiple statements from the Minister of Health that concerned me. As such, I'm raising this point of privilege for her contempt of the Legislature at the earliest opportunity. These statements made by the Minister of Health misled the Legislature by telling the Legislature something that was not true and affected the opposition's ability to hold the government to account. I am asking you to find a prima facie case that a breach of privilege occurred that constitutes contempt of this Legislature.

During question period, the Minister of Health stated that she did not take immediate action with the draft copy of the Auditor General's report to the Ministry of Health because "I was not sworn in." The minister further stated multiple times throughout oral questions that she was "not sworn in" as minister until October. This contravenes section 2 of the Executive Council Act. The act states that serving at the pleasure means that a minister serves in their role until the order in council is rescinded.

At the issuing of the writs, while a cabinet minister in the previous Parliament may not be a sitting member of the Legislature, he or she remains a cabinet minister until replaced. This has been part of parliamentary practice for centuries.

The Minister of Health was sworn in as health minister in October 2009. She has not and cannot produce an order in council that rescinded that appointment. She knew she was still the minister when she made her misleading remarks in the House. She made announcements. She still got ministerial pay when she collected her paycheque.

Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party even informed the health minister that the clerks of this House stated "that the cabinet stays in effect, charged with all of their responsibilities, during an election campaign." This further shows that she demonstrated wilful blindness to the facts before her and demonstrates that the minister attempted to mislead this House.

Later in Thursday's question—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Cambridge, a few times you've used the assumption of misleading the House. I would ask you to temper your language to ensure that that does not prejudice what I need to find.

Mr. Rob Leone: I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

Later in Thursday's question period, the Minister of Health changed her position on the responsibility of a minister without withdrawing her previous statements. She stated, "The member opposite knows full well that when the House is dissolved, when we are in that interim period between the writ dropping and the new cabinet being sworn in, there are limitations on the activities of ministers." Based on her statement, "there are limitations on the activities of ministers," she recognizes that the minister is still a minister during the writ period. This demonstrates that her statements suggesting that she was not sworn in are not an honest mistake of fact; they're rather a strategy to interfere with the practice of the opposition holding the government to account.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Wrap up, please.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, give me one second. I did summarize this for you. I guess the summary wasn't quite enough for you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've read the original as well.

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to draw your attention to the Honourable Steve Peters, who on September 28, 2009, quoted David McGee's Parliamentary Practice. I think you have the quote, so I won't go with that.

The three criteria that Mr. McGee stated are, I think, effective in this case. The first is the statement that the minister was not sworn in can be construed as being misleading due to the fact that it is, in fact, incorrect. Secondly, despite being told by the leader of the third party that the Clerk said otherwise, the minister stated, "When I was sworn in as minister ... after the election;" in this statement, the Minister of Health, despite knowing that the clerks confirmed that she was a cabinet minister during the writ, implied that she was not sworn in during the election. Lastly, Mr. Speaker, the intent from the minister to allegedly mislead the Legislature is demonstrated by the information provided from the clerks' table. The Minister of Health intentionally ignored that information in an attempt to cleanse her from the issues involving Ornge that arose during that campaign.

Further, O'Brien and Bosc define contempt as "any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege, tends to obstruct or impede the House in the performance of its functions." The health minister's statement that she was not sworn in obstructs the opposition from holding the government to account and, as a result, constitutes contempt for this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, our role as parliamentarians is to represent our constituents. For opposition MPPs, we have the additional role of holding the government to account. Oral questions is time for MPPs to get information from ministers based on the inquiries that we receive from our constituents. In other words, we are the liaison between our constituents and the government. The words of ministers of the crown are fundamentally important because we have to go back to our constituents to inform them of the government's response. It is unacceptable for the House to be misled by a minister because it counters our duties to our constituents.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, at the very least, that you recognize the severe nature of these misleading statements and, like Speaker Milliken of our federal Parliament, refer this matter to an appropriate committee of the Legislature, even if it's only to clear the air. Should you find that a prima facie case of contempt does in fact exist, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion and to refer the case to a committee of the Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for his letter originally and for his summation now, and I do remind him one more time that you are not to make any other prejudiced comments about misleading as it was not germane to my decision pre—I need to make that decision afterwards. So I want to thank the member.

The government House leader on the same point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to respond to the point of privilege presented by the member from Cambridge regarding certain answers given by the Minister of Health during question period on March 22, 2012.

As we've heard, the member claims that contempt of this House occurred from certain answers that the Minister of Health gave on the date. Specifically, he asserts the very serious charge that the minister deliberately misled the House.

Mr. Speaker, I would point you and other members of the Legislature to comments made by Speaker Carr on June 17, 2002, in regard to a similar matter raised by the then-member for Niagara Centre, Mr. Kormos. The Speaker ruled, "The threshold for finding a prima facie case of contempt against a member of the Legislature on the basis of deliberately misleading the House is therefore set quite high and is very uncommon. It must involve a proved finding of an overt attempt to intentionally mislead the Legislature. In the absence of an admission from the member accused of the conduct, or of tangible confirmation of the conduct independently proved, a Speaker must assume that no honourable member would engage in such behaviour or that, at most, inconsistent statements were the result of inadvertence or honest mistake."

While remarks made by the Minister of Health on Thursday may have required further explanation or clarification, they in no way demonstrated a deliberate attempt on the minister's part to mislead anyone. I wish to refer members to the matter involving the Honourable Art Eggleton concerning comments he made in the Canadian House of Commons about the handling of captured prisoners by Canadian troops in Afghanistan, as summarized in O'Brien and Bosc: "In his appearance before the committee" that was looking into the matter, "the Clerk of the House referred to Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand where it is stated that the following elements have to be established when it is alleged that a member is in contempt for deliberately misleading the House: one, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement, the member intended to mislead the House...."

I'd be happy to provide you, Mr. Speaker, with the references to that appearance.

On pages 2 and 5 of the letter from the member from Cambridge, he admits that the minister continued to clarify her remarks throughout questioning. I would argue that this hardly seems like the behaviour of someone attempting to deliberately mislead this chamber. There's simply no case to be made that the minister either knowingly or intentionally misled this House.

Mr. Speaker, through you, with the greatest respect, I would also caution the member from Cambridge that a continuous spree of frivolous points of privilege dilutes the seriousness of such accusations, especially this one. Accusing a member of contempt is both serious and consequential. Not only has the member from Cambridge failed to provide convincing evidence on his case, but he's lowered the level of dignity and discourse in this place by tossing around such very serious charges carelessly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Point of order?

Mr. Jim Wilson: On the same point of privilege: It's unfortunate, the language that the House leader for the Liberal government has used there. In fact, I think he owes the member from Cambridge an apology on those very comments. It's really quite below this honourable member, who is an honourable man on normal occasions.

Mr. Speaker, when I read the very well-researched, five-page submission by our honourable colleague from Cambridge, I think that the point, from a layman's point of view, was that the minister had an opportunity during that exchange, because she was reminded by the leader of the third party that the table officers had indicated that she still served as a cabinet minister during the writ. During that debate, she heard that several times from the NDP, from ourselves, and she may have even heard the table itself say that. The fact of the matter is, she did not correct her behaviour, and she continued to use the ploy that she wasn't in elected office or wasn't responsible during this period of time. To me, that is misleading the House in a purposeful way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you for everyone's input. I appreciate the opportunity to hear

your concerns, and I will reserve my ruling on this in due course.

There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COLLINGWOOD BLACKHAWKS

Mr. Jim Wilson: It is with great pleasure that I rise today to applaud the recent victory of the Collingwood Atom A Blackhawks. On home ice at the Eddie Bush Arena on Saturday, the Collingwood Blackhawks defeated the Whitby Wildcats in a 3-0 victory to win the Ontario Minor Hockey Association championship and sweep the series.

The Collingwood Blackhawks have been unstoppable this year, having been undefeated in the Ontario Minor Hockey Association playdowns, beating Owen Sound, Brampton, Burlington and Grimsby before defeating Whitby for the championship on Saturday.

It's also exciting for many of the players on the team who are now celebrating their third OMHA title, from their novice win in 2010 to an Atom win last year, and now this year's impressive win over Whitby. Saturday's shutout means that Collingwood will now go on to compete in the prestigious Ontario Hockey Federation championships, where Collingwood will compete with the four regional Atom champions.

This is the first time in the history of Collingwood minor hockey that a Collingwood team has qualified for the Ontario Hockey Federation championships. The tournament will take place in Cobourg from April 13 to 15.

People from around Collingwood are cheering today and are extremely proud of their hometown team. Without question, the Blackhawks' clean and upbeat approach to hockey has gained them an admirable reputation throughout Ontario.

I know I speak for all members of this Legislature in congratulating the Collingwood Atom A Blackhawks on being the Ontario Minor Hockey Association champions and for the immeasurable amount of time, commitment and sacrifice that they make to their sport of hockey.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations, Blackhawks.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I want to make a few comments regarding clean energy. Ontarians work hard every day to make better lives for themselves and their children. Our government is working hard, too. Just like families across the province, when times are tight, we have to make careful choices—choices that support the needs and aspirations of all Ontarians; choices that will create jobs for Ontario families.

That's why I'm proud that our government is investing in economic development in places where it is really needed. That's why I'm disappointed that the official opposition voted against the attracting jobs and investment act and the thousands of local jobs it would have created in our communities.

The PCs are putting ideology ahead of helping small businesses create jobs across the province. This act would help companies across eastern and southwestern Ontario to expand their workforce, buy state-of-the-art equipment, and compete and win in a global economy.

The Conservatives are using the global recession to push ideology, tearing down rather than helping to build a stronger Ontario. The NDP has been silent on eliminating the deficit and creating jobs. They're quick to criticize new ideas, but have no suggestion of their own. Our government, on the other hand, has a balanced plan and is making thoughtful choices to eliminate the deficit and grow the economy and create jobs.

ELMIRA MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

Mr. Michael Harris: I am pleased to take this opportunity to inform the House and members of the public about the time-honoured tradition in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga that I look forward to every year.

Right now, organizers in Elmira are busy preparing for the 40th annual maple syrup festival, where my team and I will be serving the best pancakes in the region, drenched in Elmira's legendary maple syrup.

I also want to give my colleague Elizabeth Witmer fair warning that this year's Team Harris will defeat the reigning champions, her daughter Sarah's Mother Flippers, in the annual pancake-flipping contest.

On a serious note, though, I want to congratulate the more than 2,000 volunteers who work every year to ensure that the maple syrup festival upholds its Guinness World Record for being the largest festival of its kind. With more than 65,000 people attending each year, this festival has done so much to promote Elmira, the surrounding areas, local maple syrup producers and, most important, a unique sense of community spirit.

For years, the proceeds of the maple syrup festival have played a major role in supporting local organizations and building stronger ties amongst residents. Typically, 40% of the proceeds from the festival go to support people with developmental disabilities in my riding, while the remaining funds are divided amongst other charitable organizations.

This festival not only provides families with an excellent way to spend some time together, but it also serves as an example of what people can do to benefit their community. So I encourage everyone to join me at the maple syrup festival in Elmira this weekend.

DANFORTH EAST COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Mr. Michael Prue: We have a wonderful group in Beaches–East York called the Danforth East Community

Association, or DECA, as we like to call them. They have been responsible and continue to be responsible for revitalizing that area of Danforth Avenue east of GreekTown, which I think is known by pretty much everyone across the country. They have organized a number of community events over the last couple of years—events for children, jazz festivals, arts.

A few weeks ago, they brought a wonderful man all the way from Australia by the name of Marcus Westbury, from Newcastle, Australia. He came to talk about revitalizing downtown cores and the wonderful job that they have done in Australia. This was done in conjunction with the Gerrard bazaar BIA. What Marcus was able to show is that you can revitalize a derelict downtown into a tourist town. They fixed up the storefronts. They filled the vacant buildings. They used a lot of it for community space. That is what DECA wants to emulate here.

I was pleased to meet with Anita Schretten, Tanya Geisler, Catherine Pekelmy and Ciara Behan. We talked about flower planting, facades repainting and involving the entire community in order to keep costs down for business but also to make sure that local people have an input as to how those improvements will affect the community.

My congratulations to DECA and everything they continue to do.

BIRTHING CENTRES

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: I rise in the House today to acknowledge and applaud our government's decision to create two birthing centres in the province of Ontario. This service will not only provide women with more choice on where they can deliver babies, but it's part of our government's health plan to move more health care services out of hospitals and into the community, where we can safely do so.

Specifically, I would like to acknowledge the fine work by Lisa Weston and the nine other midwives who work at Sages-Femmes Rouge Valley Midwives. These passionate and hard-working midwives serve women and families in my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East and all of Durham and mothers from across both Durham region and greater Scarborough. These centres will be run in partnership with Ontario midwives, who attended more than 15,000 births last year.

This is one part of our government's action plan for health care and our commitment to quality care delivered with better results and good value. As a mother of two children, it's great to see a service that provides more choices for women in terms of how and when they deliver their babies.

DRIVER LICENCES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: As you know, Ontario's economy is struggling. Our unemployment is the highest in the country, with over 600,000 people out of work.

Currently, at age 65, a driver holding a class A licence in Ontario is required to take a mandatory road test to simply keep their job. The current requirement adds significant costs and act as a real drain on our economy. Workers are required to take multiple days off to rent, hire and insure a truck and trailer, not to mention lost wages and time away from family. Additionally, trucking companies need to find replacement workers and often have no choice but to decline contracts due to uncertainty caused by this needless requirement. Drivers themselves are often reluctant to accept work and assignments in the immediate time following their mandatory age 65 road test due to this regulation.

In most jobs, when you work hard and gain experience, you're rewarded and advanced, but in this case, the most experienced and most seasoned drivers face unnecessary red tape, government bureaucracy, and discrimination.

Since my election, I have consulted with associations, stakeholders, drivers and workers. The entire trucking industry is saying the same thing: Something needs to change, the McGuinty government just doesn't get it, and it's time for new direction.

The McGuinty government is moving too slowly on this issue. The industry is calling for action, and so am I.

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HEALTH CARE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Today in Kenora, members of the public are standing together in solidarity to oppose proposed cuts to our health care system. They are worried, as am I, that if the government moves forward with many of their cost-cutting measures, as proposed in the Drummond report, their community's hospital will lose care beds, as well as many other communities across my riding and across the province of Ontario.

Health care in my region is already under attack, facing significant challenges as a result of service models based on southern Ontario realities that simply do not exist in our region. Our smaller health care centres, like those in Rainy River and Ear Falls, are under significant threat as a result of government inaction on this issue. This is creating a strain on all hospitals and community health care centres in our region who are forced to pick up the slack.

I would like to take this time to express my gratitude to those citizens in Kenora and across my riding who are standing up to proposed cuts and government inaction, and I would once again like to ask the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to step up to the plate, acknowledge the challenges that are facing our region and work with me and all stakeholders to find a solution.

NORTH YORK GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Michael Coteau: I rise today on a very unique occasion. On behalf of the residents of my riding, Don Valley East, I'd like to extend heartfelt congratulations to

Dr. Tim Rutledge, president and CEO, and his entire team at North York General Hospital for receiving the highest designation from Accreditation Canada. This is a rare achievement for any hospital or health care provider in this country.

After being evaluated using over 1,800 different criteria, North York General Hospital has received accreditation with exemplary standing for meeting 100% of the required practices and standards in all areas of the hospital, including all patient care programs, administrative functions and community engagement.

North York General Hospital has implemented various initiatives over the past years which have contributed to this recent achievement. It has launched a computerized provider order entry system that combines the latest clinical evidence from medical literature, making it possible for medical practitioners to provide the best-quality care for their patients.

Further, North York General Hospital has implemented a bar code scanning system, which is the first in Canada. Bar code scanning uniquely identifies each medication and each patient across medical, surgical and critical care units.

Receiving accreditation with exemplary standing assures patients and their families that the care they are receiving from North York General Hospital is of the highest quality. We're extremely proud to have such a dedicated health care service provider in our riding of Don Valley East.

EPILEPSY

Mr. Rod Jackson: Today is an important day. It's epilepsy awareness day.

Epilepsy is one of the most common neurological disorders. It affects over 100,000 Canadians and over 65,000 Ontarians—

Interjection: Too many.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Far too many.

Though this area is broadly researched in public awareness, sometimes stigma can make life with epilepsy more difficult for people than it needs to be. With one in every 100 people living with epilepsy, awareness and a basic knowledge about the condition is very important.

I'd like to recognize two organizations working towards greater awareness about epilepsy: the Epilepsy Cure Initiative and Epilepsy Ontario. These organizations reach out to the public, support individuals and families living with epilepsy, participate in advocacy and awareness campaigns, and often contribute to research initiatives.

Epilepsy has also touched my family, and from this experience I know how challenging it can be for an individual and for a family. The management of this condition, concerns with driving and medication, access to treatment as well as strain on family are realities that are realized when living with epilepsy.

As a public, it's our duty to understand this condition and do what we can to make life a little better for those that are living with epilepsy. For this, awareness is something I think is paramount. Today is about all those courageous people managing their epilepsy. I notice that there are a few people in the House today wearing purple today in honour of those that suffer with epilepsy, and I thank you for that.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION AMENDMENT ACT (RETROFITTING OF RETIREMENT HOMES WITH AUTOMATIC SPRINKLERS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PRÉVENTION ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE (MODERNISATION DES MAISONS DE RETRAITE PAR L'INSTALLATION D'EXTINCTEURS AUTOMATIQUES)

Mr. Paul Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 to require the retrofitting of retirement homes with automatic sprinklers / Projet de loi 54, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie pour exiger la modernisation des maisons de retraite par l'installation d'extincteurs automatiques.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, this bill amends the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, to require that all retirement homes be retrofitted with a system of automatic sprinklers.

PETITIONS

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Toby Barrett: The petition here is organized by PAFE, Parents as First Educators.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, as an anti-bullying measure, Bill 13 is unnecessary because Ontarians already have Bill 157; and

"Whereas Bill 13 promotes radical revisions to school instruction on sex and gender that a majority of parents do not support; and

"Whereas legislation is not the way to implement equity education (this should rather be addressed by

teacher training, after wider parental consultation, in a way which respects the views of people of faith);

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to vote against Bill 113."

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates $2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

"Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario's horse racing and breeding industry;

"Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

"Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates $1.1 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

"Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government $1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Call on the government of Ontario to protect the $1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program."

I agree with this petition and will affix my name to it, and Alexander will bring it down.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition from a group of residents from York South–Weston addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas St. John the Evangelist Catholic elementary school in Weston is overcrowded, with 480 students in a school designed for 260; and

"Whereas the students will be relocating 40 minutes away in September 2012 during the duration of the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; and

"Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board has placed St. John the Evangelist third on the urgent capital priority list for 2012;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Respectfully request full funding to replace St. John the Evangelist school during the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; therefore, the students are not relocated twice."

I support this petition. I will be affixing my signature and handing it over to page Nicholas.

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RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to restore local control.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's Liberal government is forcing Ontario municipalities to build industrial wind and solar power generation facilities without any local say or local approval; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government transferred decision-making power from elected municipal" councils "to unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats, who are accountable to no one; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government has removed any kind of appeal process for municipalities or for people living in close proximity to these projects; and

"Whereas Tim Hudak, Jim Wilson and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party have committed to restoring local decision-making powers and to building renewable energy projects only in places where they are welcomed, wanted and at prices Ontario families can afford;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government restore local decision-making powers for renewable energy projects and immediately stop forcing new industrial wind and solar developments on municipalities that have not approved them and whose citizens do not want them in their community."

I certainly agree with this petition and I will sign it.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury—more precisely, from Chelmsford—and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas" since "October 2009, insured PET scans" are "performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with" Health Sciences North, "its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through" Health Sciences North, "thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Emma to bring it to the Clerk.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Solray Energy Corp. has given notice of its proposal for a class 3 solar power facility known as Epsom Solar Farm to be located in the township of Scugog; and

"Whereas the site is on prime" agricultural land "that has been in production for many generations; and

"Whereas we consider productive farmland to be of vital importance to farm and rural communities by providing healthy, locally grown food and ensuring the sustainability of Canada's food supply; and

"Whereas class 1 to 5 farmland and land that is zoned rural or agricultural should be protected from the current proposal and similar" proposals "that may be considered in the future; and

"Whereas other sites of less value to agriculture are better locations for solar" production development;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the" Legislative Assembly of Ontario "not to allow large, industrial solar farms on prime agricultural land, and we further express our support for giving local communities, through their elected municipal councils, the power to control and approve large-scale renewable energy developments."

I am pleased to sign and support it and give it to Aylin, one of the new pages here.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the horse racing industry employs approximately 60,000 people, creates $1.5 billion in wages and $2 billion in recurring expenditures annually; and

"Whereas the partnership that was created between government and the horse breeding and racing industry has been a model arrangement and is heralded throughout North America, with 75% of revenues going to the provincial government to fund important programs like health care and education, 5% to the municipalities and only 20% goes back to the horse business; and

"Whereas the horse business is a significant source of revenue for the farming community and rural municipalities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Finance continue the revenue-sharing partnership with the horse racing industry for the benefit of Ontario's agricultural and rural economies."

Speaker, I agree with this. I'll add my signature and I'll send it with Alexander to the clerks' desk.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a new policy from the Electrical Safety Authority that mandates that all electrical contractors must have at least one licensed master electrician on staff for every business effective December 31, 2011, is forcing electrical contracting small businesses ... out of business;

"Whereas this ESA policy severely impacts small electrical contracting businesses in Ontario. George, in my riding ... who has been" an electrical contractor "for the past 51 years and a small business ... for the past 36 years, who has good standing with the Electrical Safety Authority, Ontario Hydro, local utilities, who follows the same rules and regulations of the ESA, follows the Ontario electrical codes, adheres to the same inspections and pays the same fees as large companies" has now been forced out of business. "Effective December 31, 2011, George will no longer be licensed to practise in Ontario" and has been forced to close his business.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Consumer Services to direct the Electrical Safety Authority of Ontario to modify the licensing requirements to allow small electrical contractors and self-employed electricians to work in the residential and rural market without the unnecessary burden of obtaining a master electrician licence, or at the very minimum, grandfather those who are currently qualified and entitled to work in Ontario."

I support this petition and will be signing it and passing it to page Felix.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas there have been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

I think that's a good idea, Mr. Speaker. I agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION

Mr. Toby Barrett: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Grand Erie District School Board has purposely gerrymandered busing, circumvented its own catchment areas, avoided all but the most basic facility improvements and actively positioned PDCS for closure before and during the ARC process;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We petition the Legislature of Ontario to conduct an inquiry into the actions of the Grand Erie District School Board over the past 10 years leading up to the current accommodation review.

"In addition, we call upon the Legislature to put a moratorium on all current and pending school closures in the province of Ontario."

GREENBELT

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. This one is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Greenbelt Act was passed by the Ontario Legislature in 2005, affecting property rights in Ontario; and

"Whereas the right to own, use, enjoy and the opportunity to earn a living from private property is the basis of freedom and democracy; and

"Whereas the greenbelt restricts property owners in the use, enjoyment and ability to earn a living from their private property; and

"Whereas property owners are not being compensated for any loss of these rights;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the greenbelt plan area at the 10-year re-evaluation in 2015 to allow ... development when requested by the community and supported"—more importantly here—by local communities to allow people to enjoy their right to their property.

I'm pleased to sign this petition, in support of it, and present it to Abbigail, one of the new pages here.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Toby Barrett: I have a large collection of anti-wind turbine petitions.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

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"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas there have been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

I affix my signature to these petitions.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition from my riding of Durham, which is as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the greenbelt; and

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and provincially sensitive wetlands; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier governments to plan, protect and enforce"—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Excuse me a moment here—my colleague Mr. Shurman.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't heckle your members.

Mr. John O'Toole: —"governments to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries; and

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Minister of the Environment" and the Minister of Natural Resources, who is here, "to initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provin-

cial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent contamination of the greenbelt, specifically" in my riding of Durham, on Lakeridge Road, as well as in Newcastle.

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents. The former Minister of the Environment is here—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise today on a point of privilege. I have provided you the written notice of a point of privilege, pursuant to standing order 21(c), so that I may raise the matter in the House.

The question of privilege relates to interference by a member of the Ontario Liberal caucus bureau with my free movement within the legislative precinct on Thursday afternoon, following the flag-raising ceremony in recognition of Greek Independence Day. I am raising this matter of privilege at the earliest opportunity.

The facts on which this matter is raised are as follows: I attended the flag-raising ceremony on the front lawn of the Legislature with Bill Walker, MPP for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. Immediately following the ceremony, Mr. Walker and I made our way to committee room 230, where we had a scheduled meeting with Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller. To get to the committee room, we had to pass through a corridor leading to the entrance of the Liberal caucus boardroom. The boardroom was being used to host an exclusive reception for members of the Greek-Canadian community. As Mr. Walker and I walked through the corridor, a member of the Liberal staff stepped in front of me and physically blocked the corridor by extending his arm in front of me. He apparently assumed Mr. Walker and I intended to attend the reception, because he advised us that it was a "private event," and that we were not permitted. It took me somewhat by surprise, because we were in the hallway and not the entrance of the boardroom. When I told him I was actually heading to a meeting elsewhere, he allowed us to pass so I could continue on to my meeting with the Environmental Commissioner—at least not immediately. All of this occurred in front of visiting dignitaries and guests from the community, Mr. Speaker.

Freedom of movement in the legislative precinct is a privilege of members that has been recognized by legislative authorities and established by parliamentary precedent.

In House of Commons Procedure and Practice, Marleau and Montpetit state, "The House has the authority to invoke privilege where its ability has been obstructed in the execution of its functions or where members have been obstructed in the performance of their duties."

In House of Commons Procedure and Practice, O'Brien and Bosc explain both the privilege and the role of the Speaker in more detail. In chapter 3, which deals with privileges and immunities of members, they state, "In circumstances where members claim to be physically obstructed, impeded, interfered with or intimidated in the performance of their parliamentary functions, the Speaker is apt to find that a prima facie breach of privilege has occurred."

Speaker Fraser ruled on this particular privilege in 1989, Mr. Speaker, following a protest at the House of Commons. The member of Parliament for Windsor West was stopped by security at a roadblock and prevented from accessing Centre Block by car. On October 30, 1989, Speaker Fraser found that even though the argument could be made that the member was free to walk to Centre Block, a prima facie case for obstruction existed. The matter was referred to a standing committee.

In 1999, Speaker Parent considered a point of privilege that was raised by members of Parliament who had difficulty accessing their offices. The members stated that the impediment prevented them from performing their functions and meeting their obligations in a timely fashion. Speaker Parent ruled that a prima facie breach of privilege existed and referred the matter to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Perhaps the most significant precedent comes from this Legislative Assembly, with Speaker Peters's ruling of May 4, 2010, in respect to members of the Ontario PC caucus being obstructed on budget day 2010. In that instance, as here, Mr. Speaker, staff from the Ontario Liberal caucus bureau physically prevented members of the opposition from attending to parliamentary duties. There, it was to be present in the chamber, while here, it was to attend a meeting with an officer of the Legislature. In that instance, as here, the breach of privilege embarrassed the opposition in the presence of dignitaries and invited guests.

I appreciate that the government will try to minimize the breach that occurred, as they did when the budget day obstruction occurred. If so, then the following from Speaker Peters is important to consider:

"For a prima facie case of privilege to be established, it is enough ... that members wanted to attend the House and were, at least for a time and against their will, prevented from doing so. It is of no significance where such an obstruction occurred or what parliamentary proceeding members were prevented from attending.

"Further investigation may well reveal a plausible explanation or mitigating circumstances for what occurred in the budget lock-up on March 25, but I do believe that such a further investigation is warranted."

I respectfully submit that there is no conclusion but that a prima facie breach of privilege has been established for the events that occurred on Thursday. I was physically obstructed, impeded and interfered with when I tried to make my way with Mr. Walker to committee room 230 to meet with the Environmental Commissioner. While the interference was short-lived, it clearly occurred. Upon your ruling that a prima facie breach of privilege exists, I am prepared to move the matter be

referred to an appropriate committee of the Legislature for a hearing into the facts and circumstances that led to the breach.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that I expand on one aspect of my letter to ensure that you can fully appreciate the action of this staffer. When I say in the letter that he blocked me, I should tell you that he actually extended his arm, physically restraining my passage. He did this in full view of members of the public, including dignitaries who had been invited to the Greek Independence Day reception.

1340

Clearly, he left the impression in the eyes of those visitors to the Legislature that the authority of a Liberal Party staff member transcended that of an opposition member of provincial Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, while I was not here two years ago, I must tell you that the facts surrounding the point of privilege accepted by Speaker Peters two years ago are virtually identical to the facts in this matter. Speaker Peters ruled that it wasn't his job to determine whether the breach of a member's privileges was serious or minor; his ruling made it clear that that was the job of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. His ruling did make it clear, though, that impeding the free access of a member was a serious matter and one worthy of referral to that committee.

I am deeply troubled by the need to stand before you and raise this issue. After a great deal of reflection and having reviewed the facts of Speaker Peters's ruling of two years ago, I cannot, in good conscience, let the unwarranted action of this Liberal staff member go unchallenged. It is somewhat ironic that the issue raised before Speaker Peters occurred on budget day in 2010 and we are, today, on the cusp of the announcement of this year's budget. For anyone who, like me, believes in the ultimate authority of Parliament, it is immensely disappointing that Liberal staffers would appear to have learned nothing from the ruling of your predecessor two years ago.

Restricting my free access to walk the halls of Queen's Park can only be considered breaches of my privileges as a member of provincial Parliament. Given the facts of this matter, and the precedent of the Speaker's ruling in 2010, I would ask for your ruling in the affirmation that I have suffered a breach of privilege.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the independence day ceremony out on the front lawn is symbolic. I heard the fine Minister Sousa, the member from Scarborough Southwest, the member from Beaches–East York and, of course, my esteemed colleague the member for Whitby–Oshawa, who so eloquently put how proud they were to stand there on the front lawn, praising the great nation of Greece, the founding fathers of democracy and the freedoms which we enjoy, and yet on this particular point I was obstructed in democracy.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask for your ruling.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. On the same point of privilege, the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Speaker, I, too, was denied entry on that day to Room 247. I was on the front lawn with members of my community, my neighbours, my friends and people with whom I had worked for many years in the Greek community. I was invited, along with everyone else who was on that lawn, by the member from Scarborough Southwest to attend the reception. You can imagine my horror when I got upstairs and was denied entry by a staffer named Dylan. When I challenged that staffer, he told me he was under direct orders that no one except Liberals could enter.

I was so angry, I came down the stairs and wrote a letter to the government House leader, which he undoubtedly has by now, with a carbon copy to the NDP House leader and the Conservative House leader outlining the umbrage that I felt, being denied access to a public celebration in honour of the Greek community.

If I was good enough to be asked by the government side to come out and say words of praise to the Greek community, I think I should have been welcomed in with my friends. I have to tell you that I was with one of the directors of the Pan-Macedonian Association of Ontario, a woman by the name of Sue Keramidopoulis. We were separated at the door. She was allowed to enter and I was not. It was extremely embarrassing to me. It was embarrassing to the president of the Greek community of Toronto. He told me at the celebration the following night—it was in Markham—that he too was embarrassed. He didn't know what to do, but he felt the entire Greek community had been slighted.

When I wrote to the government House leader, I also sent a carbon copy to the Speaker. I'm not sure whether you're going to rule this is a question of privilege or not, but I think that any time a public celebration is held in any room, be it a government room, an opposition room or any other room, if it is open to the public, then it needs to be open to the members of the opposition as well, and that's the point I'm trying to make.

I understand that that room is used for government purposes; I understand. We have a caucus room too, as do my colleagues of the Conservative Party, and when it is a private meeting, it is a private meeting. But this was a public meeting to celebrate the events of 1821 and the broader Greek community. To separate out who in this chamber can enter that room on such an occasion and who cannot, I think, was a gross violation.

When I challenged Dylan, he made it very clear to me that those were the orders under which he was acting. He was acting under explicit orders, and he stepped between me and the door so that I could not enter. I do want to say that the member from Scarborough Southwest, when he heard I was barred, attempted to mediate and come out, but was told by Dylan as well that those were his instructions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same point?

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciate the fact that I was given notice of this point of privilege by the member opposite, but I have to apologize; I only received that notice just at the end of question period around noon

hour. I did some very initial digging, Mr. Speaker, and I don't know all the facts of the situation. I do know that there was absolutely no intention, in any way, to impede members of this Legislature from their duties here in the Legislature, and I certainly apologize if there was a misunderstanding.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, I would ask your indulgence—the members have brought forward their case—if I would be allowed to submit something in writing to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. I really do take this one very seriously, and I would like to hear everyone's issues, please.

House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: As I say, Mr. Speaker, I plan to look into this matter further. I do, at the outset, express an apology to any members if there was a misunderstanding. Obviously, the intention was never to impede members in their work.

I ask your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, if I would be allowed to make a submission to you in writing, which, of course, I would copy to the other House leaders, on this point of privilege once we have all the details in place, so that we can fill you in on our perspective on this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Just to further this point of privilege, I want to concur that the events did, in fact, happen as Mr. Milligan has outlined.

We were going to another function with the whole intent, as we were invited by the consul to come back to the Greek community, and he was physically impeded. I think it was very deliberate. I think my esteemed colleague was recognizable as a member of opposition, and it was very deliberate and it was that way.

We chose, out of respect for this House, for the elected people and particularly for the day we were celebrating, not to make an incident of it that day, because we did not want to further tarnish the goings-on of that afternoon. But we do believe very strongly that it needs to be brought to your attention. We do believe we were—not only was it rude, but it was unacceptable behaviour. It was deliberate. It was very much, "You shall not come in here." We were invited on the front lawn—we went out with our colleagues—the way it should have been, to come up to that reception, and I think it was very deplorable that we weren't allowed in there.

More concerning, I think, or perhaps equally concerning, is that the Greek community and those in my community and Mr. Milligan's might think that we did not wish to attend that gathering, that we did not want to bring our best wishes on behalf of our caucus and our colleagues. So I very much dislike that we were physically barred from going in there.

1350

It is my hope that you will rule that this was, in fact, a point of privilege. I would take up the House leader across the hall—that not only would I like him to do an investigation and make an apology, but I would like that they extend an apology to the Greek consulate, advising that we wished to go and we were not able. We were, in fact, obstructed from being able to attend that function, which we were planning later on to go to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I had another incident that relates exactly to what these gentlemen were talking about—the members. When the Queen visited a year and a half ago, Mr. Bailey and I were also pushed aside by Liberal staffers and told to stand behind a fenced area, and the Liberal members were allowed to go and sit in privileged seating, so this is not a new thing, Speaker. I think it's an ongoing situation that certainly has to be addressed, and I'm sure you'll take the right, appropriate action on this. It's very, very troubling.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further on the same issue? The member for Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Just as the opposition House leader, I want you to know that the full force and effect and support of all of the members of the PC caucus are behind this complaint, the point of privilege. As Mr. Miller from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek just pointed out, and others are pointing out, this is becoming an epidemic around here, in terms of Liberal staffers and their high-handedness.

It does no good for the government House leader to say that perhaps that staffer had no intention of impeding a member's movement in the hallway. If you look at Speaker Peters's ruling of two years ago—almost two years to the day; two years to the occasion, it being budget day last year, and budget day is tomorrow—he ruled in favour of the point of privilege. It was referred to committee, and we had an opportunity to explore exactly what happened. The fact that the government said that they had no intention of delaying us on that day to come into this House to hear the budget I think he found to be irrelevant in his ruling, so I'd ask you to take that into consideration.

Secondly, I do want to also support the honourable member from Beaches–East York in terms of—you can imagine the embarrassment caused to the member, and to our members also, our members going to a different meeting. As he was making that point, the minister, Mr. Gerretsen, said, "Oh, I guess you guys didn't want to go to the Greek party." It's exactly the point that was just made, in terms of the impression that might have been left by the incident to the Greek consulate and the guests that were there.

If other people on the Liberal side are thinking, "Well, maybe the Greek community will take this as a slight," then I think it's appropriate that the honourable member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound also asked the government House leader to extend an apology to the Greek community and those that were assembled.

Mr. Speaker, not to belabour the point, but this is, as Yogi Berra would say, déjà vu all over again. It's what

happened in 2010. I was one of the ones who was impeded and almost late for the budget in this chamber. We had an opportunity, and we appreciated the opportunity at that time, by Speaker Peters to have a full airing, which is what we hope you will do today: Allow a full airing on this in one of the committees.

On that occasion, I remind you, it did some good. People got things off their chests, the OPP were able to explain what happened, and all was forgiven. To hear that it's happening again with Liberal staffers is unforgivable at this time, and I hope you'll give us a remedy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Hang on. There are rotations here, and I'm trying to make sure we all have an opportunity.

The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think there are three things that I want to add to this, as you think about—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Excuse me.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What do you mean? I can't speak? What's your problem?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the Chair, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: All right. No, I thought you were heckling me intensely on the other side of the House.

There are three points that I want to make here. The first point is that if the political staffer indeed did what is being said happened, which was to prevent a member from the assembly from freely walking in the halls to get to his or her office, to whatever meeting they were going to, clearly, that is out of order. It's not just a question of order; it's also a question of contempt, to a certain extent, because all of us, as members, have the ability to move freely within this building, to be able to do the work that we have to and that we've been elected to do, as representatives of those ridings. So the first part is, if there's an investigation, we need to clarify that. If the political staffer from the Liberal Party was trying to stop the members from freely travelling in the halls of this building, that is quite serious, and I think it's something we need to take a look at. And I think the point that the opposition House leader makes is important: that maybe there needs to be a bit of a hearing about this to find out exactly what happened.

The second thing I want to say is, it was really ill-advised, if the government decided to do what was essentially a reception to celebrate the Greek community of Canada, to do it strictly in their caucus room so that other caucus members could not be invited. I would ask that you maybe take a look at trying to give some guidance to government and opposition parties, if you're going to have such a thing that celebrates a community, that in fact you do it somewhere in a committee room where it is open to everyone.

We understand the process: The Liberal caucus room is the Liberal caucus room. If you want to invite me or you don't want to invite me in, that's your call—the same way as with mine or the Tory caucus room. But I think the issue here is, if we're going to have public celebrations on the front lawn, raising the flag and celebrating the Greek community of Ontario, I think the Speaker should look at giving some direction to the government and others when you're doing those kinds of things, that you don't make them invitation only. If you're inviting us to the flag-raising outside, certainly you've got to invite us to meet with the community, wherever that reception might be after. It would probably have been more appropriate if they had actually done it in a committee room and all of this would have been avoided.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, on a point of privilege: Some comments were attributed to me just now by the member from Simcoe–Grey. If I had any comments at all, I said exactly the opposite—exactly the opposite. The flag-raising was a public event, attended by members of all three parties. If there's a reception in this House—and I'm just speaking for myself at this point in time—all members should be invited there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join the chorus here on this point of privilege raised by the member for Northumberland–Quinte West. Some of this may sound repetitive because my points have been made to some degree by the member for Timmins–James Bay. It is something that I thought we had taken care of a couple of years ago when a similar situation happened. I believe the member for York-Simcoe was one of them. It may have been the member for Whitby–Oshawa, too—

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Burlington, I think.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —Burlington and York–Simcoe who were denied access to an event, a very similar occasion like this.

My point is, Mr. Speaker, when we invite people from outside of this Legislature to an event and it is attended by members of the Legislature outside, then what kind of message are we sending if then there's an exclusive event held afterwards, for only members of one political party, where other members of the House do not have unfettered access to?

We, as members, are all equal. If you happen to sit on the government side, you happen to be on the governing side, and if you happen to sit in cabinet, you're part of the executive council. But we are all equal members of this Legislature, and our access here should be absolutely and totally unfettered.

While I know it is not my place to question the motives, and I'm not doing that, I would ask you to perhaps ask the questions. Why would an event that was public until noon or shortly after become a very political event? This was not a political ceremony. This was to honour Greek Independence Day, one that we all joined

in the celebration of, or those who had the opportunity—representatives of all political parties had the opportunity to join in that celebration, and they did thus. Why does it turn political afterwards?

You have to ask yourself, what is the motive of the governing party here in this House? I think that needs to be addressed, because things like this should not happen and cannot happen. Access to this building and anywhere in it is a matter of privilege of members of this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, one last time.

Mr. Bill Walker: Just a point of clarification, again, to the Attorney General: I just want to clarify very clearly that the Greek consulate general extended an open invitation to everyone there to come in because the archbishop had not spoken on the lawn, and we had the privilege to be invited inside. So again, I find it doubly reprehensible that you would have a partisan event after that invitation is extended; and also, that you would actually put a directive out to staff. Obviously, staff had no choice to be able to defer that. They were probably only doing what they were told to do. So it's doubly reprehensible, especially when it was Greek Independence Day and the whole foundation of democracy.

Speaker, I hope you'll take that into consideration when you make your ruling.

1400

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank all the members for their contributions to this very serious situation, and let you know that I will reserve my ruling. I also agree to allow the government House leader to submit a written statement, as long as it's understood that it will be shared with the other House leaders to ensure that they have an understanding of what you're writing.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCEPTING SCHOOLS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 POUR DES ÉCOLES TOLÉRANTES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 7, 2011, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters / Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui a trait à l'intimidation et à d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure, on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus, to speak to anti-bullying initiatives in Ontario, and in particular to the legislation placed before us.

I'd like to first start by welcoming Karen Strype and Gail Birkett from the Canadian Federation of University Women. They are here in support of the anti-bullying coalition, a coalition I will be speaking about this afternoon.

An important topic of late, bullying has become further pronounced than it has ever been experienced by members of this chamber. Cyberbullying, text threats and the sad reality that today's bullying has taken on a greater severity and viciousness is evidence why this assembly needs to act, and to act in a decisive, holistic and non-partisan manner.

For some time now, several members of this assembly have drawn attention to the plight of bullied students and have proposed a variety of ideas that could bring awareness to bullying and also to prevent it. One member in particular who has devoted such energy is Elizabeth Witmer, the MPP for Kitchener–Waterloo. Mrs. Witmer is a former minister and critic of education, but she is also a former teacher and a former board chair. I would like to commend the member for her important and substantive work in anti-bullying initiatives in this House.

There are also a number of other Ontarians who have committed their attention to eradicating bullying. While it is impossible to mention all of them, let me share with you and with this House some of the initiatives that are occurring at a grassroots level. In Ottawa, Majic 100 FM has taken a leading role with their No More Bullies campaign. Led by on-air personalities Stuart Schwartz—known to most of us as Stuntman Stu—Trisha Owens and Angie Poirier, the No More Bullies campaign has been raising awareness in schools and through a rather unique outreach program. They have celebrities, pro athletes, politicians and everyday Ontarians write "No More Bullies" on their hand, take a picture of it with their face and stick it on a Facebook campaign so kids know there is support there.

By having Ottawa Senators' owner Eugene Melnyk, Canadian band Simple Plan, Canadian singing sensation Carly Rae Jepsen and even a few MPPs like myself and the member from Ottawa Centre participate, Stuntman Stu's team is telling students it is not okay to bully. It is not cool. But even more importantly, Mr. Speaker, Stu, Angie and Trisha are letting kids who are bullied know that they are not alone.

My friend Colin McSweeney often says of bullying, "We need to make bullying taboo and socially unacceptable the same way drinking and driving became intolerable 25 years ago." That's exactly the type of activism that Stuntman Stu and his team are doing on-air and in Ottawa schools to end bullying.

Another group in Ottawa, the Bengals football team, is also thinking outside the box when it comes to bullying. They want to rehabilitate the bullies. Their Be a Bengal, Not a Bully program is smart, it's accessible and it's productive. The Royal Ottawa Hospital made them an Inspiration Award recipient for their program this past year. Let me read about this program:

"Since 2008, Bengal players, coaches, parents and managers have been united in their fight against bullying both on and off the field. This youth-led initiative brings the anti-bullying message to an ideal place for maximum impact—the football field."

"The program began with a simple anti-bullying policy—developed and written by the young players themselves—and has since grown into a core component of the Bengal organization. Be a Bengal, Not a Bully identifies and supports leaders from within the team who participate as peer mentors for the program.....

"For the Bengals, the message is clear: Bullying will not be tolerated."

That's impressive, given that it's coming from young football players.

These are just two examples of anti-bullying campaigns in Ontario.

Parents and students have literally come together across the province and have created a vast network of support, awareness and lobbying. I would like to acknowledge a few of those, if I may: Lesa McDougall and Karen Cameron are the co-founders of Bluewater Citizens for Education; Corina Morrison is the co-founder of the London Anti-Bullying Coalition; Katie Neu is the co-founder of Bullying Canada; Karen Sebben is the co-founder of the York Region Anti-Bullying Coalition; and Anne Taylor is the chair of the St. Thomas/Elgin Anti-Bullying Coalition.

They have done outstanding work, pointing out the seriousness of bullying in our communities. Each of them has been directly affected by those impacts. Each of those who I mentioned today can speak to why Ontario needs a strong and comprehensive anti-bullying law that will complement the work they are doing on the front line.

Awareness isn't enough anymore. I have come to learn that first-hand. It is not as simple to say, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me." That is facile, it is ill-informed and a poor excuse for turning a blind eye to the truth.

Let me read a headline from the Ottawa Citizen of October 27. For those at home and who are here today, listening to this debate, I just want you to know this will disturb you: "Jamie was forced to switch schools in grade 7, after a group of four or five students forced flashlight batteries down Jamie's throat while they were on a school bus." That's not sticks and stones. It's not name-calling. It's torture; it's torment. It's unacceptable in a civilized society.

Those who think we needn't enact legislation to protect Ontario students from this type of cruelty might be unaware that bullying has been a factor in some Ontario students and their decision to take their own lives as a result of bullying. Some students have chosen to die by suicide because they felt that the bullying would never stop—bullying, in these cases, so deplorable that the student bullied reaches the depths of despair and cannot see a better day.

That boy I just told you about, that had the batteries shoved down his throat, was Jamie Hubley. Sadly, in Jamie's case, it took his suicide for the bullying to stop. Jamie's story has received international attention. I can tell you, Speaker, I will personally never forget learning—where I learned and where I was when I found out he'd died. I think of him every time I see his mother and father. I felt, when he died, that there must be something I could do. I know I'm not the only one who feels that way.

Edmund Burke, the great British philosopher, once said, "All that is required for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing." Knowing what we know about Jamie's tragic experience, the good people in this place cannot turn a blind eye to bullying. We cannot do nothing about this problem. We cannot ignore bullying in our schools and on our school buses. It is simply not an option.

I genuinely believe this House collectively wants to do something. How else to explain Bill 13 and Bill 14 being introduced on the exact same day by both the government and the opposition to eradicate bullying?

1410

It's now generally accepted that there is a problem with bullying or, as Burke put it, an evil that we have to deal with. The question now becomes how we triumph or, in plainer terms, how we fix that problem. I've contemplated this very question in my mind countless times since Jamie died. I personally have gone through all the emotions as well. I've been angry, I've been sad, I've been shocked, and then I've been angry again. I'm angry because Ontario students can feel so isolated and distressed as a result of bullying in one of our public schools that he felt that there was no other avenue than to take his own life.

I have spoken a great deal about Jamie in this House, Mr. Speaker, to share his story and to remind Ontarians that bullying today has gone too far. An even more dreadful fact is that Jamie's story is not the only one; it's just the one that I know most personally because his parents are my friends. Mitchell Wilson was only 11 years old when he took his own life because he didn't want to testify in court against his bully. According to durhamregion.com, Mitchell's dad said he was taking one of the walks prescribed for his treatment of muscular dystrophy last November when he was mugged by an older boy, intent on taking an iPhone. The attack was the start of a downward spiral for Mitchell, who was bullied by other kids and fearful of having to go to court to testify. In words that can only be defined as heart-shattering, Speaker, Mitchell's grandmother said this: "'It isn't OK to beat a little disabled kid and get away with it,' a weeping Mrs. Wilson said. 'It's not right. It's broken my heart to lose my grandson. He was my only grandchild and now he's gone. It's horrible.'"

Since being named PC education critic, I have encountered countless parents, some of whom I mentioned here today and all of whom have shared their personal stories of anguish, stories of how their children were beaten, berated and bullied because they were different—different. They were bullied because they were different. Each story has brought with it a "cause," if you will, of why their son or daughter was bullied. Jamie was targeted because he was a figure skater. As he got older, it was because he questioned his sexuality. He was the

only openly gay kid in his school, so the bullies targeted him. In Mitchell's case he was bullied because he had muscular dystrophy. Speaker, my grandfather died of muscular dystrophy. I know how that disease can ravage your body while your mind is still there, take away your mobility and your ability to act. He could not defend himself from that cruel disease. This boy physically could not fight back. The physically weakest of the weak, bullied because he had a deadly disease.

Others are targeted because of a learning disorder or their weight. I've heard stories of kids being bullied because of their economic circumstances, mercilessly punished because the other kids considered them poor. Still others have been made fun of and intimidated at school because of their religion. Having faith in the Almighty should not be a reason in Canada for derision, contempt or mockery. But sadly, on our school grounds, it's as if anything can go. Bullying takes many forms, and there is not only one cause—an important point for us to remember throughout this debate.

Speaker, this brings me to the legislation before us. We know that on November 30 the Liberal government introduced Bill 13 and the PC opposition, of which I'm a proud member, through the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, introduced Bill 14. It was a significant day, in my mind. There was certainly consensus among legislators that bullying had reached a tipping point in Ontario and, further, there was agreement that something needed to be done. Before us were two bills—both different but, as I've said in the past, complementary, not competing. We had a golden opportunity in this minority Parliament to do something momentous.

We had an opportunity to put students first, not ideology. We could have done the right thing by bringing the best and brightest minds of this assembly together, while setting partisanship aside for the good and the safety of our students. We could have had the strongest anti-bullying legislation in North America, but sadly, I'm not so sure that can happen now. I dare say we missed a golden opportunity. I'm disappointed that the government was not confident enough in the good minds and ideas that this Legislature can bring to do the right thing, and that their insecurity of losing control of the agenda has gotten the better of them. I do believe Bill 14 is of higher quality than Bill 13.

On November 30, as the PC education critic, I said of Bills 13 and 14, "We will be serious about passing anti-bullying legislation, starting, of course, with Mrs. Witmer's" bill "and ending, of course, with the government's legislation, because we believe that measures included in both of those bills will make Ontario the leader in North America in anti-bullying legislation."

Further extending that olive branch, on December 1, I told the Ottawa Citizen, "We have offered to merge the two bills, and I am sure we'll merge them in committee. Everybody in the legislature is on the same page. There's merit in both bills and there's tremendous political will behind this. I support the Premier on this."

Perhaps I should have been clearer. I support the desire to eradicate bullying, but I also believe we must take this task seriously. If we get this bill wrong, Speaker, the kids suffer. This isn't about headlines; it's about getting it right.

Listen to what Karen Sebben has to say—I introduced her earlier—from the York Region Anti-Bullying Coalition. This is her quote: "My son's three years of bullying took the form of homophobia. But as parents, it didn't matter to us what form the bullying took. The fact remains that aggression and assault were taking place regardless of the reason. This is the focus of any anti-bullying legislation and the PCs' Elizabeth Witmer got it right with Bill 14." A strong endorsement by Ms. Sebben of Bill 14, not Bill 13.

You're aware, Speaker, that I approached the government to have them seriously consider getting their bill right and using the minority Parliament to all of our advantage. We had the opportunity to do something revolutionary here by using obscure legislative tools to bring our biggest and brightest ideas together.

I have personally lobbied this government for months to pause second reading so we could create a process that would send both bills immediately to committee to merge. For months, I thought the negotiations were moving along. That was until late last week, when the government unilaterally put this bill on the table and on the order paper so we couldn't continue our negotiations.

Ontario students should have been given the confidence that this assembly could put them first and set aside partisan differences. I think it would have been a worthy exercise, one that could have produced remarkable results: tough anti-bullying legislation that would deal with bullying of all types and forms without the divisiveness of entrenched positions that are starting to take root.

Even parents and media commentators were cheering this idea along. I'm going to quote a few more people, Speaker. On March 6, the Toronto Sun's Moira MacDonald said about the bills, "Both had their merits—the Conservatives' Bill 14 Anti-Bullying Act, had a more all-encompassing focus on bullying compared to the Liberals' Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act.

"Nevertheless, even Premier Dalton McGuinty said there was an opportunity for both parties to work together on the final bill."

1420

Allan Hubley wrote in the Ottawa Citizen, "I have personally met with a number of MPPs from all parties and believe they want to work together to develop a final bill that will enable schools to accomplish real action on the anti-bullying issue.

"This can only happen quickly if all parties agree to send the government's bill to committee for discussion and revision, and to blend it with some good ideas from Witmer's bill."

In fact, this past December, Allan Hubley and his wife Wendy joined me at Queen's Park. They met with Dalton McGuinty and Tim Hudak, they talked to Peter Tabuns and Laurel Broten, and they shared stories with Christine Elliott and Elizabeth Witmer. The Ottawa Citizen said of

the day, "They also wanted to tell the Premier to start working with the other side on this issue.

"'The kids are watching us,'" said Hubley. "'This is important.'

I agree with Allan Hubley. He has been a principal adviser to me on teenage mental health, youth suicide and bullying. If I may say, he and Wendy are two of the strongest, kindest and gentlest souls I have known in my life. They have put their own grief on the back burner so they can tell Jamie's story, because they don't want another family to go through the pain they are battling.

I don't want another family to go through the struggle that the Hubleys are facing. I'm certain that no one in this place wants another family to face the same sorrow that Allan and Wendy are feeling. Yet there are kids watching, and what they see is a Liberal government unwilling to admit they could have done better by working with others.

Imagine using the Liberal slogan "Going Forward Together." Those words could have been more than just catchy electioneering, and we could have presented to the public a first-class bill aimed at eradicating bullying of all kinds. Alas, it appears that sloganeering has won the day, Speaker, and I'm disappointed to say that we are debating an inferior bill to Mrs. Witmer's. Therefore, even when this bill does eventually go to committee, it is not likely to produce the type of protection Ontario students deserve because of the constraints of the legislative process.

This is where it becomes real; where the rubber hits the road, so to speak. Parliamentary procedure, I'm sure you'll be aware, really doesn't matter that much to moms and dads who are at their wits' end because their kids are being bullied and they're struggling with suicide. Parliamentary procedure means nothing to those people, Speaker, because they are going through something that only some of us here feel, and hopefully many of us won't ever feel, every day at our house. All they know is that they want their children protected. All the Hubleys want is their child back, and I'm certain they won't be able to understand why we couldn't break with parliamentary convention and work together and use a commonsense starting point.

I'm sure they won't be happy to learn that the minister was so entrenched in her own views. I'll even use the word: The minister was selfish not to accept that there are valid criticisms of her legislation, that there was a better way and that we could have worked together. We could have put partisanship aside. We could have improved her bill. But she was selfish.

I know they'll be utterly disappointed back home to know that if you disagree with even one "and" or "but" in the minister's bill, you'll be labelled a bigot or a homophobe—bullying, of course, at its finest. And I must say that members of this assembly have been targeted by that, because there are significant challenges to any piece of legislation where you will want to bring attention to those flaws and you will want to bring in amendments. All of us, regardless of party, could have given consent to put a process together that works for those kids who are hurting, for those parents who are at their wits' end and for all of them who just want something done.

Mr. Speaker, let me read something that Anne Taylor recently wrote:

"We are calling on all parties to work together and take time for careful consideration over the drafting of a final bill. 'Bullying is abusive in nature and is a result of intolerance, inequity and misuses of power. In order to put an end to bullying and bullycide, we must use legislation to help build this framework. The language must be concise and specific regarding bullying and peer abuse. Our hope is to have a bill strictly devoted to anti-bullying for all students and to keep other issues of equality separate so that the bill's purpose is not distorted, making it about political reputations or narrowing the bullying focus ... instead of the safety and learning success of every single one of the children and youth in this province.'"

I consider Bill 14 to be the gold standard of anti-bullying legislation because it is devoted to the anti-bullying of all of Ontario's students. A comparison document done by Mrs. Witmer's office provides a detailed analysis of both 13 and 14, and it's clear that her bill is one that the Legislature should be passing.

Let me make this comparison, because I think it's extremely relevant to where myself and Mrs. Witmer are with respect to anti-bullying legislation.

Bill 14's definition of bullying is more thorough, focusing on what constitutes bullying and how it affects the victim. The Liberals' definition is preoccupied with the reason for bullying, whether it's gender, religion, or race, and does not place enough emphasis on the form or outcome of bullying. The Liberal definition focuses on the perceived power imbalance, based on the aforementioned individual factors. Our definition doesn't require specifically stating what the individual factors are, since it is designed and written to include all conceivable reasons one may be bullied. The PC definition includes the impact that bullying has on the school environment, the education process and the victim's emotional well-being. Our definition is longer, more detailed and therefore more comprehensive.

The PC bill includes a section devoted solely to addressing cyberbullying. This is critical due to the increasing prevalence of Internet-based bullying. The Internet allows perpetrators to relentlessly bully and harass their victims 24 hours a day, and often anonymously. The Liberal bill barely makes mention of cyberbullying, referring to it instead as an "electronic" form of bullying. Our bill prohibits the many different forms of cyberbullying: creating an anonymous Web page, impersonating another person, communicating material to more than one person, or posting material on an electronic medium that can be accessed by more than one person.

The Liberal bill requires school boards to issue bi-annual surveys to students in order to collect information on the efficacy of board policies and plans. The infor-

mation is solely for internal board use. Our bill, the bill submitted to this Parliament by Elizabeth Witmer, requires principals to track and to forward the number of bullying incidents that have occurred each year to their respective school board. The board is then required to compile this information in a yearly report and submit it to the ministry. The ministry will subsequently release this information in an annual report detailing the number of bullying incidents that have occurred provincially and what steps the ministry has taken to address bullying in schools. Our bill, the PC bill, recognizes that in order to make progress and improvements, the ministry and boards must have the necessary data.

A major component of our Progressive Conservative bill is accountability. The Liberals fail to address this in its entirety.

Our bill is much more robust in its requirement for the ministry and school boards to develop comprehensive bullying prevention plans. It requires the ministry to establish a provincial plan that will serve as the basis for each board's plan. The boards are mandated to develop their own plan and submit it to the ministry for approval. The bill stipulates what must be included in each plan. Bill 13, however, states that the minister "may" establish policies and guidelines with respect to bullying prevention, and I will touch on that a little bit later because it is an area of concern for many parents across Ontario.

1430

Let's continue to do this comparison. The Progressive Conservative bill requires principals to provide every student and parent and guardian with the board's prevention plan, as well as include the plan on the school website. The Liberal plan does not require that.

The PC bill formalizes a process for investigating allegations of bullying. It also stipulates the duties of the principal following an investigation in which bullying has been deemed to have occurred. The Liberal bill does not include anything similar to this.

The PC bill incorporates bullying prevention directly into the provincial curriculum, beginning in kindergarten and continuing throughout the elementary and secondary grades. This, Mr. Speaker, will enable the prevention of bullying. The Liberal bill, on the other hand, does not require this. Their bill focuses on discipline, which is reactionary and punitive, and from what we hear from parents, not workable.

Our stakeholders, including parents of bullied kids, do not believe in expulsion. They believe in rehabilitation, something I was talking about when I told you about the Be a Bengal, Not a Bully campaign that's happening in Ottawa to make sure that kids are learning bullying is not acceptable and violence in the schools is not acceptable.

The PC bill establishes mandatory remedial programs for perpetrators of bullying. They must be provided by boards and delivered by social workers, psychologists or other trained professionals. It also stipulates that these programs must be made available for victims, albeit on a voluntary basis. The Liberal plan does not require perpetrators to attend remedial programs. That means the bully is still going to be out there without any necessary supports. It's problematic, Speaker.

I would like at this point in time just to say a special acknowledgment to a member of Elizabeth Witmer's staff, Dan Powers, for compiling those points for our caucus, who has taken a lot of his time to ensure that we got it right.

As Karen Sebben pointed out in yorkregion.com—and we've spoken about Karen before—"The York group, along with coalitions in St. Thomas-Elgin and London, Bluewater Citizens for Education and the youth-led Bullying Canada, released a statement this week raising 'grave concerns' over Bill 13.

"If anti-bullying legislation is to be effective, they say, it should be all-encompassing to include bullying by school staff as well as students and provide families easy access to information.

"Ambiguous, vague and unavailable bullying policies can allow administrators to diminish incidents, the release said."

Further on, it reads, "The group is asking all parties to leave politics at the door and work together, with input from victims and their families, to combine the Liberals' Bill 13"—with the Progressive Conservative Bill 14—"both tabled in December."

Now I've said many times in this House that if one student takes their own life, quits school or self-harms after we pass the bullying law, we will have failed. Here we have a credible and impartial parent group—a group of them, actually, parent groups—who have seen the effects of bullying first-hand, telling us in this chamber that Bill 13 is not as strong as Bill 14. They tell us that we need to check our politics at the door. In fact, Sebben's York Region Anti-Bullying Coalition has linked arms with several other parent groups that I mentioned earlier. They make critical arguments why Bill 13 is not as thorough as they would have hoped.

Now, allow me to read into the record, Speaker, excerpts of an open letter the group released earlier this month. I might add, before I read this into the public record, I did place a copy of this letter on the desk of the minister a few weeks back, and I do hope she took the time to read what this group has said. It is quite lengthy, so I will ask your indulgence as I read all of this information into the public record.

They start, "It is vital to the success of our education system and the well-being of generations of children and young adults to reduce the incidence and impact of bullying. Without informed decision-making and effective legislation, every Ontario student remains at risk....

"There are two bills tabled, two bills that have some good ideas, but two bills that don't go far enough. We beseech all to work together and take time for careful consideration over the drafting of a final bill because, once passed ... the government of the day can claim that there is no further need to look at bullying issues ... and that time is needed to see how effective the new legislation is ... and that will likely amount to years. The students of Ontario cannot afford to have any more

ineffective legislation passed. They cannot afford any further 'band-aid' approaches or 'wait and see' attitudes. Comprehensive and effective legislated changes to the Education Act are needed to ensure that this province is doing its very best to keep students safe in its schools. Bullying is abusive" and results in "intolerance, inequity and misuses of power. In order to put an end to bullying and bullycide, we must implement an anti-oppressive framework. If we are to use legislation to help build this framework, the language must be concise and specific regarding bullying and peer abuse. To integrate the problem of bullying with other school-based issues would, in effect, put the issue of bullying on the back burner yet again. Our hope is to have a bill strictly devoted to anti-bullying for all students and to keep other issues of equality separate so that the bill's purpose is not distorted, making it about political reputations or narrowing the bullying focus," as I stated earlier.

They go on to say: "It is vital to the success of our education system and the well-being of generations of children and young adults to reduce the incidence and impact of bullying."

Then they outline a number of initiatives that they're concerned about. One is "all-encompassing." "Any definition(s) related to bullying (Bill 14 has a thorough one; Bill 13 does not provide one) must be all-encompassing, pertaining to all members of school communities.... As victims and parents of victims," they say, "it doesn't matter what form bullying takes. Safeguards need to be written into the Education Act that would prevent students from being harmed by all acts of bullying, including, but not limited to, homophobic acts and even, and especially, those acts carried out by those in positions of authority. We will continue to seek this and ask for nothing less than legislation that ensures that our children's bullying experiences are never repeated."

Speaker, this is coming from concerned parents from across Ontario, from York region, from London, from Elgin-St. Thomas, from Kitchener. Right across this province, parents have banded together, with their own ideas, because they actually see this happening to their own children. They actually have had to deal with some of the repercussions that bullying has had in their own family, in their own schools, and they're telling us how to get this right.

They also say we need easy access to information. They say: "We have seen first-hand (and have been made aware of many other cases) how ambiguous, vague and, often, seemingly unavailable bullying policies, procedures and definitions allow administrators to diminish incidents and remove them from the realm of bullying altogether. Clear definitions are crucial and must cover all forms of bullying (Bill 14 covers some of this....)"—Bill 13, not so much.

They also talk about tracking and reporting, and I'm very proud that Mrs. Witmer has made a very important and dedicated addition to her bill to ensure that there is going to be tracking and reporting.

This anti-bullying coalition, that represents so many of our communities across Ontario, says: "All schools should be required to keep a quantitative and detailed record of all reports of bullying throughout each school year. The public should, again, have ... access to the quantitative information, which should be broken down to clearly show:

"a) the total number of bullying incidents reported in a given ... year;

"b) the total number of reported incidents that, after investigation, were deemed to have been legitimate incidents of bullying;

"c) the total number of incidents that required disciplinary action;" and

"d) the total number of incidents that required legal intervention in any capacity."

1440

Now, as I have mentioned on a number of occasions, and in the spirit of the legislation introduced by Mrs. Witmer, this organization also believes in a very key and important point: There should be support for all. "Bills 13 and 14 both recommend offering support, assistance and remedial programs to both victims and aggressors. The damage caused by bullying is not, however, limited to the bully's chosen victim(s). It is far more wide reaching than that, as its effects are felt by family members as well.... Early intervention is critical in attempting to avoid the years of psychological damage that can follow ongoing bullying attacks. Time is of the essence when you are watching your child crumble and become suicidal."

Those are very important words from parents who are quite distressed. They believe there needs to be comprehensive policies for all school boards. "Bill 13 would seem to suggest that school boards must each establish their own policies and guidelines regarding bullying, prevention and intervention, and that these policies must be approved by the Minister of Education." Their concern in this open letter: "Inconsistent policies and guidelines in different boards across the province leads to confusion, mismanaged time and too little accountability. One overarching and comprehensive policy for all of Ontario" would be so much better.

Let me give you an example. Let me take you back to that quote of October 27, where I read to you about Jamie. Remember? The batteries? Jamie was going to one school at that time and his parents took him out of that school and put him in another school. In Ottawa, we have four different school boards. It is not impossible to see four different school boards have four different schools on the same street. Those four schools could end up having four different policies as a result of this minister's bill. Does that make any sense to you? It doesn't make any sense, and that's why Mrs. Witmer has a far superior bill.

This other group speaks to third party oversight as well. They say, "The vast majority of these lawsuits are centred on bullying incidents and inadequate responses to keep students safe." You can sense their frustration when you read their letters. "There is a clear need for third party oversight in order to hold school boards" account-

able. I would argue that could be the minister, if the minister was serious about getting this bill right.

They talk about integrity and responsibility: "Professional development programs on bullying must include information and instruction regarding incidents where teachers or administrators exhibit bullying behaviour toward students, as witnessed by other teachers. Reporting duties need to apply even if the bully is a teacher or fellow staff member.... There must be some form of legislation in place to protect teachers who come forward in order to protect victims of bullying or abuse at the hands of teachers."

Then, their final point: "Absolute accountability." Listen to this: "In reading over Bill 13, there is repeated use of the phrase, 'The minister may....' In our experience," they say, "policies and procedures that incorporate the use of the word 'may' are virtually worthless to parents advocating for their broken children. The doors are left wide open for administrators to respond, 'Well, we are not required to do "that,"' and that is exactly what so frequently happens. When it comes right down to it, the phrase, 'The Minister may...' really means, 'The school board likely won't have to....'"

These parents are frustrated, and they've been asking this assembly to act for many years now. We now have that golden opportunity, and it has been squandered. We have a minority government; every single voice in this Legislature is now equal, and they can't handle that to protect these children.

So, their letter concludes by saying this: "Although we would like to be optimistic about the possibility of positive change with the tabling of Bills 13 and 14, instead we are concerned that Ontario families are about to begin a lengthy period of time with no real improvement in the area of bullying prevention and no possibility for such."

These points are a complete analysis, as I have said, done by a number of anti-bullying coalition organizations and parent groups and those who have been bullied across Ontario. They have been in the field for quite some time. They have credibility. The research that they have done and the expertise that they have brought to the table deserve to be listened to. They deserve to be heard, and it's important that that experience has been because of themselves and their own children.

They are not the only ones who have weighed in. Several Osgoode Hall Law School, University of Toronto and even some University of Ottawa students from my hometown have written to this assembly with their concerns, too. Let me quote what they have said, because when these legal minds come and view legislation from this assembly, I think it's incumbent upon all of us to listen to what their criticisms might be:

"While we commend the goal of Bill 13 insofar as it addresses the need to eradicate bullying, we are concerned with the method and scope of this bill in attempting to achieve 'bullying prevention and intervention.' While bullying can single out traits such as race or sexual orientation, bullying is not limited to students displaying such traits—rather, any and all students may become targets, whether for the size of one's body, for shyness or for any other characteristic. Legislating that school boards empower only those students who lead clubs from one of four explicitly protected groups—gender equality, anti-racism, respect for students with disabilities, and sexual orientation—sends the message that some grounds for bullying merit more attention and protection than others. Consequently, the scope of the bill is too narrow and exclusive to promote true equity for all potentially targeted traits and identities. Moreover, the bill is silent on character development and on creating a safe environment for speaking about bullying."

They further say—and these are students at various law schools throughout the province of Ontario. I will reiterate: They are from Osgoode Hall Law School, the University of Toronto and from the University of Ottawa. "The bill's section on disciplinary measures similarly gives explicit attention and protection to issue-specific causes. Section 4(2) lists the general term 'bullying' along with 'sexual assault, gender-based violence and incidents based on homophobia.' Sex and gender-related issues are not the only motives behind bullying or violent behaviour...." So that is interesting. They say finally, "We suggest that such licence may alienate or marginalize students whose conscientious beliefs may not align with the dominant views of school boards about what merits punitive sanctions."

It's interesting, but they're not alone. There are still groups that have come out, including one of the largest teachers' unions in all of Ontario, ETFO. They have written to Mrs. Witmer to express some support for her legislation, and I will read into the record this—and I know my time is getting down there: "Given the increase in reports of serious student bullying, including bullying that has led to students committing suicide, it is no coincidence that there are two bills before the House seeking to strengthen public schools' capacity to address serious anti-social behaviour on the part of students. In its analysis of Bill 13, this submission will also make reference to specific provisions of Bill 14, the Anti-Bullying Act, 2011, sponsored by MPP Elizabeth Witmer. There are aspects of this private member's bill that would strengthen the framework for responding to incidents of bullying and should inform amendments to Bill 13."

As a mom, I want to see strong anti-bullying legislation pass this Legislature. But as the coalition has said, Bill 13 will not solve the problems. It will not give us the desired results. For that reason, both emotionally and intellectually, I don't feel I can support the Liberal bill at this time. Will that change at committee? As hopeful as I am, Speaker, I am not optimistic; in fact, I'm a realist. Having negotiated with this Liberal Party for the past number of months to try and put kids and their protection first at the expense of partisanship, I've now seen what they've done. I've now seen them unilaterally call this bill while we in the official opposition believed that the negotiations were still ongoing to put the very good ideas

of Mrs. Witmer into that bill. As we have seen today, there are a number of other ideas that have come from across the province from people who are desperate, who need our help, who want us to work together so that we can end bullying in our schools. They wanted us to do that together.

I don't see Bill 13 as being particularly relevant to students in every case, and without Mrs. Witmer's bill fully included in Bill 13, this bill is incomplete. It's an incomplete bill that will not solve all of the bullying-related problems that Ontario students are confronted with.

Yet if Bill 13 does pass, the Liberals will claim that they have acted, that they have done everything, that they are going to eradicate bullying in Ontario. They are going to pat themselves on the back, Mr. Speaker, and they're going to be proud of themselves. It will be a wonderful day to be a Liberal in Ontario. Yet the problem for them will be that if we fail one more kid in this province after we pass their bill and they didn't get it right, it will be a very big problem, not just for them but for all of us. I have said from the get-go, including earlier in these remarks, that if one more kid commits suicide, self-harms or drops out of school because of bullying, we will have failed.

I'm not interested in the back-patting competition of this Liberal government. I think we can do better. We must remember why we are here: to make Ontario a better place for all Ontarians—not just some, but all; not just the strong, but also the weak; not just the straight, but also the gay; not just the thin, but also the smart; not just the weak in learning abilities, but also those people who are working hard; not just for the overweight; not just for the learning-disabled. We have to protect all Ontarians, regardless of why they're being bullied. That is our job. That is why we were sent here. We cannot continue to have any more of these problems in our schools. That is the issue.

That is why we believe, on this side of the House, that we could have done something remarkable with each of our equal voices here. Instead, this is a government so focused on controlling the agenda that they gave up a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. They squandered an ability to take all of the good ideas and put them together. They chose to make a splashy headline at the expense of kids.

I'm utterly disappointed, and I'm very disappointed that they broke faith with this House on this bill. But, Speaker, this isn't the first time. They've done this before—not exactly this way. But let's go back a week ago when this assembly decided to vote for a select committee to investigate Ornge. This House stood and passed a motion to review what happened at Ornge. We've been asking for that minister to step aside. We wanted someone to be accountable. So just like this bullying bill where they were negotiating and they broke the negotiations, they've also broken faith with this House.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Ms. MacLeod has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All of those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1454 to 1524.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Will the members please take their seats.

Ms. MacLeod has moved the adjournment of the House. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing so that they can be counted by the table staff.

Take your seats.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing so that they can be counted by the table staff.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 29; the nays are 39.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

I now return to the member for Nepean–Carleton, who still has the floor.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Speaker. I truly do appreciate the opportunity to have participated in this debate.

I do understand that the former Minister of Community Safety, who used to be in charge of protecting kids in this province, is heckling me over an important bill that people want to have their say on. My understanding is that we have an ability to debate this piece of legislation. If that Liberal government didn't want to have to deal with 30-minute bells and delays, then they should call a select committee and they should put Bill 13 and Bill 14 in committee together.

But what are they going to do instead? Instead, what they're going to do is heckle, drown us out, shout down the opposition, because Dalton McGuinty thinks he's got something called a major minority—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. I do appreciate to talk about this important issue. It's one that I've raised on several occasions. I hear the little chirpers over there. They weren't here for the hour in which I discussed how important passing effective anti-bullying legislation was. They didn't hear the voices that I brought to this chamber on behalf of the parents in York region, in London-St. Thomas, in areas across the province like Kitchener and Ottawa, who are concerned about this issue.

I'm going to conclude today—I have about five minutes left—by reading something from Allan Hubley.

"This is one issue where partisan politics and special interest agendas should not get in the way of the ultimate goal: protecting kids from bullying. Personally, what I

want to have in the final bill and what I believe every parent in Ontario can support is as follows:

"Support for student-led initiatives is the key to giving kids the ability to help each other. My son Jamie wanted to start a club where every child who felt out of place could join and gain peer support. He talked about tall, short, thin, fat, and kids with freckles who would benefit from a safe place to be and the acceptance by others. My son said that this club would help kids learn to accept the differences in each other.

"Politicians need to forget about trying to name the groups that may form in schools. My son Jamie said kids today don't like labels" like that "anyways."

We want to memorialize children who have taken the ultimate step that we don't want them to take. Speaker, we have to work together.

I said we must remember why we are here: to make Ontario a better place for Ontarians—not some but all; not just the strong but also the weak; not just the straight but also the gay; not just the thin nor the smart but the overweight and learning disabled.

Speaker, my favourite hymn in church—and I don't get there very often because when I get home on Saturday and Sunday, I do spend it with my daughter. But I do have a favourite hymn. I looked it up—I Googled it—because I didn't know all the words. It's called Hope is a Star. It says, "The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong, and none shall be afraid."

Please remember that's our task. It is to make sure Ontario students, when they go to school, aren't afraid. As my friend Allan Hubley has said to us on a number of occasions, the kids are watching us. Let's get this right.

Let's adjourn debate. Let's put these two bills into committee. Let's renegotiate. Why did they walk away? Is it the same reason they walked away from having a select committee on Ornge? Is it the same reason that they can't give up control: because of their so-called major minority? I am disgusted and I will move adjournment of debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Ms. MacLeod has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be another 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1531 to 1601.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Will the members please take their seats.

Ms. MacLeod has moved the adjournment of the debate.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while they're counted by the table.

Thank you very much.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing while they're counted by the table.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 33; the nays are 40.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

I again return to the member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. I do appreciate the opportunity to continue debate.

For those members who are staying seated, I don't have any more opportunities to call you on not calling a select committee, so there won't be another 30-minute bell.

However, I do know that there will be other members of the Progressive Conservative caucus that will continue to call for a select committee in the House, given the issues that have surrounded the scandal on Ornge.

Mr. Speaker, we're going to continue to call—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Speaker. I can't believe they're actually protesting us protesting them for not getting that minister to resign and calling a select committee on Ornge. That is disgusting. That government has lost its way and needs to fire the minister and call a select committee.

But let's get back to the matter at hand, Mr. Speaker. They also need to merge Bill 13 with Bill 14, and any absence of that means this caucus will not support their bill.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask all members to refrain from banging their hands on the desks. The Speaker has to be able to hear the member who has the floor.

Questions and comments?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm happy to be able to respond to the MPP for Nepean–Carleton. I've had some extra time to think about my response during the past hour as the party opposite chose to adjourn this debate twice. I thought about all the things we could have said to kids who are being bullied at school. So I'll take my two minutes to say some of those things to kids now: We support you; we believe in you, no matter what your religion, race, gender, disability, culture or sexual orientation, no matter if you're gay, bi, lesbian, transgender or queer.

The Accepting Schools Act is about getting all kids the supports they need to succeed in school, about making every school in this province a place where every kid feels welcome and respected. The Accepting Schools Act takes a whole-school approach, from a public education campaign to increased youth mental health resources.

Mr. Speaker, I remain deeply committed to passing Bill 13 in this House as soon as possible and to making each and every school in Ontario an accepting school, and I remain open to working with my colleagues in the opposition to take all the best ideas out there to make that happen. But, Speaker, when we are privileged to serve in

this House, we should spend our time thinking about the kids we are privileged to serve, and I would invite the members opposite to take the next period of time to think about the kids in every school across this province who are worried about how they are treated, who don't feel safe and accepted in their schools, who are not welcomed in the environment they are in. Speaker, I would say that the Accepting Schools Act is an important step forward, to be able to say to every child in every class in every school in Ontario—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return to the Minister of Education.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: We should say to every child in every school in Ontario that they will be accepted in their school, they are accepted in their province, we believe in them and on this side of the House we will continue to work hard in that regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I did listen very carefully to what the Minister of Education just said with respect to my colleague's comments. And what's most disappointing is that they can never accept—either the minister or this government—that anybody but them ever has any good ideas. The reality is that there were two very good bills that were being brought forward here, Bill 13, and Bill 14, which was brought forward by my colleague the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. Both of them have merit, and we initially entered into discussions about how we could merge these two bills, how we could take the best of both of them.

But you don't want to listen. In fact, the minister wasn't even here for the points that were made by my colleague the member for Nepean–Carleton, who made some very valid points about the need to listen, the need to protect all of the children, to listen to the kids, that everybody's watching—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would say to the member for Whitby–Oshawa that it's inappropriate to make reference to the absence of any member.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you, Speaker.

The reality is that both of these bills, Bill 13 and Bill 14, were brought forward in this Legislature on the very same day. We thought we entered into good-faith negotiations with the government on ways that we could explore how we could put these two bills together and get the best of both bills.

But I really feel, Mr. Speaker, that they led us down the garden path. They never really intended to have any serious discussions about how we could merge these bills. They just wanted to drag it out, and now they're forcing us to choose one bill over the other, which completely negates the purpose of this exercise in the first place, which is to get a bill that is going to protect all children so that all children, regardless of the reason they're being bullied, can feel safe and secure in their schools, and their parents can know they can send them to school every day knowing that they will be safe and secure. That's what we on this side of the House are intending to achieve. That's why we want to talk about the merits of each bill. We believe that Bill 14, which has been brought forward by my colleague, is the more comprehensive bill, and that's what we'll be supporting.

1610

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I can see how this is a very sensitive bill because of the emotions from both parties that have been commenting and making their presentations on this bill today. But one thing that I would caution that we all have to remember is how we debate this bill in this House so that we set the examples, as adults, of how our children should behave when there are disagreements. Regardless of what your point of view is on the bill, there has to be a respect for other people's opinions, whether they agree or disagree.

Bullying is one of those forms that can take verbal. Let's remember in this House, please, no matter what bill we are debating, I personally believe that being respectful and considerate and open-minded, and listening to each other's opinion—you may not want to adopt it or listen to that or agree with it, but in the end this House is supposed to be impartial, as far as I'm concerned, to debates so that we all can create the best bill. Whether it be this Accepting Schools Act, Bill 13; whether it be bill G20; whether it be bill G34, we need to keep an open mind.

If you're going to have a government that's going to work for the best interests of everyone—children, seniors, anyone—we have to remember that the debating process must and should remain respectful. We are all adults here, so please, let's be respectful of that and set an example for all of our children.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There's time for one last question or comment.

Hon. John Milloy: You know, listening to the debate this afternoon reminds me of a piece of advice I got before I came to Queen's Park, after I had been elected. Someone said to me, "You're going to go to Queen's Park and you're going to have a lot of discussions about education," because education is, of course, central to provincial responsibility. They said, "Be very careful, because it only seems that when you're in a government setting or a Queen's Park setting"—and they certainly weren't being partisan—"you can talk for hours and hours and hours about education and the word 'student' never comes up."

What I think has shocked me the most about this afternoon is—and I give the member credit, she started off her speech talking about bullying, talking about students. Then all of a sudden, we had two recesses to waste an hour of valuable debate time when we could be talking about it. I've heard from across the way that we need a committee on Ornge or we need a committee on this or a committee on that. In effect, Mr. Speaker, the opposition is trying to hold hostage the fact that we want to move ahead with a piece of legislation which is going to benefit students here in the province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of discussion about bill—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to say to the opposition members, the government House leader is six feet away from me and I can't hear him. I would ask you to refrain from heckling him and allow him to resume his comments.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of discussion about both Bill 13 and Bill 14. As I have said publicly on many occasions, the Minister of Education has said that there are good things in Bill 14, and we look forward to debate and discussion here in the Legislature and then in committee, where we have said we will have a great deal of openness to enhancing Bill 13 by taking what is best from Bill 14 and reconciling the two together. We've had a number of discussions with the opposition on ways to move forward. Quite frankly, there has been no real interest on the part of the opposition of having a pre-commitment, so there's no shame in moving ahead in second reading, which is what we're doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member from London–Fanshawe, the Minister of Education, the Minister of Community and Social Services who acts as the Liberal House leader, as well as to my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa.

It is a shame that at the time that I gave my hour-long speech on bullying and talked about constructive not only processes, but ideas, actual contents on the bill, that the minister wasn't able to listen to that first-hand. It's a shame during that hour-long debate when we were standing here talking about some of the things we could have done right had she not been so selfish—she would have learned a thing or two. I've said over the hour—and I'll send the transcripts to the minister—that I don't see Bill 13 as being particularly relevant to all students in every case. That's why we had, for months, pressured them and negotiated with them to try and come to an agreement on process.

I want to give compliments and constructive support to the people that were around that table in the parliamentary liaison working group. I believe, genuinely, that they wanted something to work.

As I've said in the past, and I've said it two or three times in this debate, if the minister would like to hear it: If one more kid self-harms, commits suicide or quits school as a result of bullying, she will have failed. It is up to her. She has an opportunity to get it right; she chose not to.

With respect to ringing the bells, it is consistent with our displeasure over this government ignoring the repeated calls to call this government into account for an egregious scandal, where they wasted almost $1 billion, not once, but this is now the second time—after eHealth, they brought us Ornge.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has decided to thumb their nose at this very Legislature, and this opposition will not allow that to continue any longer. We will fight them every step of the way. We'll continue to be the voice of the people, and we're going to continue to challenge them. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I wish to remind all members that they need to focus their comments on the issue that is being debated, this Bill 13. I would caution all members, and encourage them to confine their comments to Bill 13.

Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise today to speak to Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act. Before I go to my remarks, I want to comment on some of the remarks made by the member from Nepean–Carleton. I have to commend her for speaking eloquently about the terrible realities that many students have faced and are living with today. Bullying is a very ugly thing; it's something that destroys lives. Her remarks and her passion fit the scale of the problem that we face.

In the course of my speech, Speaker, I will be talking about agreements that we in the NDP have with Bill 13, put forward by the government, and Bill 14, put forward by the opposition.

I want to say, however, Speaker, before I get into the body of my speech, that I send my thoughts to the family of Jamie Hubley, who Lisa MacLeod spoke so movingly about. His tragic death is, in part, the reason that we are debating this matter today. My hope is that his death, and the deaths of others before him, will not have gone in vain.

There are a variety of issues on the table here, and many of them profoundly difficult for all of us to come to grips with. Almost everyone has been bullied at some point in their life, and so when you come to this issue, it's not with a clean slate, it is not with an absence of emotional baggage—no, it comes as a charged issue. We come with those emotions, those memories, that history, and we come with the concerns we have for our children.

We're not talking about things here. We're not talking about objects. We're not talking about furniture. We are talking about our children, our flesh and blood, and our fears for them and our concerns for their safety, for their well-being, for the kind of lives that they will live or be deprived of, because we know that they can be hurt, physically and mentally; they can be damaged for a lifetime; they can lose their lives.

One word—bullying—in fact covers a range of issues. I will not spend an hour going into all the different ways that one can approach this, but I'll try to address two separate poles. One is the question of individuals who are bullies, and behaviour by individuals that is bullying.

The member from Nepean–Carleton may correct me. I may have misinterpreted, but I would say that the focus of her thinking and her analysis is, that is the primary problem, the central issue, that we have to come to grips with in this society.

We know that there are individuals who use their physical strength, their emotional skills to damage others.

They will do it through blows, they will do it through words, and in these days, with electronic technology available to us, they will be able to spread their words, their concerns, their rumours and their damage around the whole world, Mr. Speaker.

1620

Sometimes the anger of those individuals comes from the anger already in their lives, the frustration in their lives. Sometimes there are more complicated emotional or mental health issues at play. But the impact of their playing out that anger and frustration on others can be devastating.

In the time since these two bills were introduced, I have had the opportunity to talk with parents and read emails and letters from parents and families around this province, stories of young children dealing with sickness who were abused badly in their school grounds; of children suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder who had difficulty fitting in with the class, had difficulty dealing with teachers, had difficulty when, on top of the problems they were already dealing with, they were yet again set upon; of parents who despaired about the future of their children who were going to have to go through psychological counselling just to get through the normal life of a teenager that we are all familiar with. That individual bullying and its fallout is profoundly significant and has to be addressed.

There's also, Speaker, group bullying, where one child or a small number of children is excluded and abused by a larger number of children. Children pick up attitudes around them: sexism, racism, homophobia. They listen to their parents at home. They watch television. They listen to the world of adults, and they carry those attitudes forward with them. It shapes the way they deal with the other children that are in their lives. Our schools and the society within our schools reflect the larger society that those schools exist in. They are not separate and apart.

Here I think is where we would differ with the Conservatives most profoundly: We see bullying not just as a problem of individuals, but a cultural problem. If we look at the history of our culture and our society as we have gone through the struggles for emancipation of women and the establishment of their independence and the attitudes that we had to deal with and, frankly, unfortunately, still have to deal with; if we look at the history of racism globally, but on our continent, some of the terrible things that have been done, supported not just by a few individuals but broadly within the culture, we know that if we want to deal with bullying, if we want to actually have safe schools, not only do we have to deal with those individuals whose anger and frustration comes out in damage to the children around them, but we have to deal with a culture that in itself has problems and a culture that has to be changed.

Speaker, when children are exposed to bigotry at home, they don't just throw it off when they go to school. If you have a child who comes from a home that is financially well off but emotionally impoverished, that weight does not drop from their shoulders in the school bus. If children come from a family in crisis, they carry that through the whole day.

I want to tell you a story, Speaker. I want to tell you a story about my experience as a child growing up in Hamilton. I went to Holy Family school on Kenilworth in the east end of Hamilton. I remember our principal coming into our class when I was in grade 3. You think about it: I was eight years old, so to have a clear memory from that time, it must have been pretty impressive.

The principal came in to speak to us because there was a new kid in our class midway through the school year, a kid called Joe, and he was being harassed mercilessly. His vulnerability was that he was new. He had no friends who would stick up for him. He was picked on because he had glasses, and as I remember it, kids who had glasses were regularly beaten up for wearing glasses. Sounds bizarre, but bullying has very little to do with the actual realities of a situation. It has to do with the dumping of prejudices, angers and frustrations on others.

Joe's mother had called the school and said at that her son was finding it incredibly difficult to come in to school, because every day he was picked on by a large group of kids in that class.

Our class was called in to a meeting with the principal. Holy Family school was run by—you know, as a kid, I never thought about the structure. A nun was the principal, and she was one tough nun. She came in. She said to us, "What you as a class are doing with this child, this kid, is unconscionable. That's not the way we raise you. That's not the way we teach you. Do you know how hurt this boy is?"

She was severe. She made it very clear that she had no time for behaviour that would leave a child crying in her hallways. She took on the responsibility of changing the thinking in that class. She tried to change the culture in that class, and in fact, she had a real impact. I don't think I'm exaggerating to say that, if she was not the voice of God, we knew that she had a direct connection, and we were not going to mess with her.

I have to say that that problem may be far away in time in my life, but when I talk to teenagers in my riding, when we talk about who gets bullied, the most likely victims are those who have newly transferred into a school. They don't have a network of friends; they are easily isolated; and that kind of behaviour and treatment continues on.

I wish it wasn't the case, but children have to learn kindness. They have to learn how to respect others. They have to learn that cruelty has consequences, because unfortunately, although we're born with the ability, we aren't given, at birth, empathy and respect. As we go through the process of life and learn empathy and respect—all of us—we learn that we can't take out our anger on others without there being substantial consequences. We have to learn that because a person looks or acts differently, that's no reason whatsoever to treat them badly. Because a person belongs to another group, it's no justification for taking out your anger on them.

That means that those in authority—and this chamber has substantial authority in this province—have to make

it very clear that respect and caring are core values of our society and need to be represented at every level and in every sphere of this society.

There are a number of issues that have to be addressed to get at the roots of bullying in our schools. We have to teach our children empathy, respect and self-understanding so that they don't take out their anger on someone who had nothing to do with causing that anger or damage to them in the first place. We have to identify and help those children who are particularly in trouble, who are particularly prone to lashing out and dumping their anger on others. We have to address those children, and that means putting resources into schools and addressing the larger social problems that create anger, frustration, despair. We have to teach people that differences between people—differences of religion, of ethnic background, of income, of gender, of gender identity, of looks, abilities or disabilities—are irrelevant when it comes to treating people with respect, to accepting them as fully human.

1630

We have to address those individuals who are the most destructive, but we also have to address those cultural norms that say that it is acceptable to abuse someone because of something inherent in their biology or their life. That has to be addressed, taken on.

I say all of this as a preamble to talking about the bill itself. In summary, the bill aims to create safer and more accepting schools by designating a Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week; requiring school boards to support student activities that promote equity; suspending or expelling students who engage in repeated bullying or hate-motivated actions; and requiring groups using school property to adhere to a code of conduct.

Given what I said in my opening remarks, this bill is a partial response to the issues that we're facing. And as I will make clear—because we're dealing with under-resourced schools—there's a lot that will need to be addressed beyond the bill itself if we're going to make the kind of difference we all want to see in this province.

What's the situation we face in Ontario? The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario that the member from Nepean–Carleton referenced earlier has said, and others have said, that bullying is prevalent in Ontario schools. It can compromise school success, contribute to low self-esteem, contribute to depression, delinquency and even suicide. In order to respond, we need to go from a base set of principles—principles that every student has the right to a learning environment that's safe, secure, free of intimidation.

We fully support effective action to ensure the safety of every student in the province of Ontario, so that no student is afraid in the morning when they get up to go to school. They may be worried about a test—that's life; they may be anxious about a trip—okay; but they shouldn't have to worry about their safety.

Effective prevention of bullying requires a comprehensive approach, including clear and consistent consequences, awareness-raising in class, awareness-raising in the community, adequately resourced student supports, and meaningful student, parent and community engagement.

Bill 13 ramps up the consequences for bullying, but only partially supports student-led equity and awareness activities, and does not address other factors which are undermining school safety, including lack of timely access to professional supports, lack of timely access to treatment and alternative programming for at-risk or special-needs students, inadequate staffing and funding for anti-bullying programs, growing inequities between schools, the lack of social skills building opportunities, and a curriculum increasingly focused on narrow EQAO outcomes.

Let's just look a bit at the history here. Between 2005 and 2010, the McGuinty government passed two bills and issued various policies aiming to improve school safety, requiring school boards to take a range of actions, including developing policies on homophobia and gender-based violence, supporting student participation in gay-straight alliances and other student-led activities, supporting victims of serious incidents, ensuring schools work with professional agencies and have school-wide discipline policies, providing training for teachers and non-teaching staff, and monitoring and reviewing effectiveness of board policies through school climate surveys.

Bill 13 is supposed to be the next step after that. It's supposed to strengthen action to address homophobia, gender-based violence and discrimination by:

—creating a legal obligation for school boards to prevent bullying, engage in progressive discipline and support equity and inclusive education;

—requiring school boards to set goals and plans to promote positive school climate and prevent bullying in their multi-year plans; conduct school climate surveys every two years; support student activities and organizations to promote gender equity, anti-racism and respect for people with disabilities;

—requiring principals to expel a student who engages in bullying if a repeat offence and presence creates an unacceptable risk; suspend a student who engages in hate-motivated bullying;

—increasing the flexibility of reporting of suspendable behaviours; for instance, allowing clinical staff to work with students who have an addiction problem as long as there's no risk to the other students;

—designating the third week of November as Bullying Awareness Week.

As I said in my preamble, we have real concerns about the bill; first of all, with regard to resources and supports. This bill ramps up punitive measures—that is, automatic suspensions—without providing the resources and supports needed to prevent bullying in the first place.

Speaker, I had an opportunity in the last month or month and a half to talk with a group of high school students in my riding, and go through some of the elements in this bill and talk about suspensions. One thing that was striking to me was their opinion that for many

students who were disruptive, a suspension was not seen as a punishment but as a holiday. They didn't have a lot of confidence in suspension—and I understand that if you're dealing with a bully, having that bully out of the building is a real benefit. But those students, my high school students, said that if you're going to deal with those disruptive kids, you actually need the resources. They need counselling. They need other social supports. They saw intense work with those bullies as far more effective than simple suspension.

I want to note that not just the experts who were high school students in my riding, but others, emphasize the need to go beyond discipline: "Making headway on issues of safety involves abandoning the failed philosophy of addressing safety through discipline/enforcement mechanisms. It does not work. While there will always be a place for discipline in identifying standards of behaviour, the reality that has thus far not been accepted in the system is that marginalized youth cannot be punished/suspended into becoming engaged....

"Hope needs to be restored through programs and initiatives that create prospects for success for youth who are currently on the outside looking in."

That's from the executive summary of the Review of the Roots of Youth Violence, published by the Queen's Printer for Ontario in 2008.

It has to be recognized as well—my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River pointed this out—that expulsion and suspension are very blunt tools indeed when you're dealing with northern ridings, where the high school you're dealing with may be the only one for 250 kilometres. There's not the option, in practical terms, of moving someone from one school to another to try to break up a bad dynamic. The member from Kenora–Rainy River made it very clear to me that what she very much needed to see was investment in school resources to deal with students who are clearly acting out. Speaker, the bill does nothing to address inadequacy of staffing and supports for students at risk of bullying or who are victims of bullying.

The other side of the coin—again, talking to the high school students in my riding, who have said that when you are victimized by bullying, when you are dealing with intense personal interactions, so often they can't get the support in the school that they need to get through those problems. We need the resources to deal with those who are marginalized and disruptive, and we need the resources to deal with those who are the victims of that acting out. This bill is not going to address those resources, Speaker, and thus those fundamental problems are going to be left untended to.

1640

According to People for Education, despite new investments over the past few years—are you raising a question, member?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I do. I apologize.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on a point of order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I apologize, and I apologize to my friend for interrupting, because I think he's speaking along the line—if I could just have permission to briefly introduce our delegation from Saudi Arabia, from King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals. They've come all the way from Saudi Arabia. They're visiting here today.

I want to thank my friend from Toronto–Danforth both for his comments, because I think they're right on the nose, and also for his kindness in allowing me to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We extend our welcome to the delegation from Saudi Arabia.

I now return to the member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Murray, you're forgiven. Guests from Saudi Arabia, my welcome. The government may tell you everything has been dealt with, but I'll tell you, as a member of the opposition, not true.

According to People for Education, despite new investments over the past few years, the role of principals, which has expanded from numerous government directives, has found us in a situation where fewer schools have principals. Sure, they've got more tasks assigned to them to deal with the problems we have, but if the principals aren't there, the problems aren't going to be addressed.

Special-needs students at one in three elementary schools in the GTA are not getting the recommended level of support. If that's true in the GTA, what's the case in Welland, in London–Fanshawe, in Timiskaming?

Speaker, we already face a shortfall of the staff that we need to address safety in our schools. More and more schools rely on fundraising for adequate playgrounds and school sports, meaning there's a growing gap in amenities and opportunities. We face significant physical problems in our schools, ones that need to be addressed. One in three schools outside the GTA has 10 or more ESL students but no ESL teacher. Students in most high schools don't have regular access to psychologists or youth workers. Three quarters of elementary schools lack supports needed to provide provincially mandated daily physical activity.

Speaker, this bill will not address those shortfalls, and, as my colleague from Welland has remarked to me before, if in fact the Drummond report goes forward, we'll see an even greater lack of supports in those schools. You can't talk about safe schools, no matter how beautiful a bill, without putting the actual resources in the schools themselves.

In 2008, the safe schools action team stressed that the Ministry of Education had to provide adequate resources for intervention strategies, and the Falconer report was clear about the resources that schools needed: increased supervision of playgrounds and halls; community outreach workers to build links with the community; support services such as social workers and child and youth workers.

Given the context of the underfunding that I've just outlined, the proposed funding associated with this bill—

$18 million over three years—is clearly entirely insufficient. Eighteen million dollars over three years is $6 million a year right across the province. Let's face it: The Toronto District School Board is looking at an $85-million deficit and layoffs of hundreds of staff. Six million dollars per year for the whole province is not adequate to provide the real resources in our schools to make sure they're as safe as our children and our families deserve.

The Falconer report recommended an increase in benchmark costs for all components of the funding formula to close the gap between funding and actual costs, an increase in the demographic component, designations—"sweatering" I believe is the technical term—to ensure it goes to programs addressing socio-economic factors, and a reconstitution of the local priorities amount. Clearly, Speaker, if we're going to have safe schools, we have to fix the funding formula, something that was promised by the McGuinty government for 2010, and we're waiting. Something was promised to make our schools safer.

With regards to curriculum, in 2008 the Safe Schools Action Team consultations "overwhelmingly confirmed that the most effective way to enable all students to learn about healthy and respectful relationships is through the school curriculum." That has not been done.

Moreover, Speaker, increasingly the emphasis on standardized testing, the EQAO results, as the primary measure of success in schools means that teachers are spending more and more time teaching to the test and are less able to promote team-based and student-centred learning. That means that children aren't getting the emotional and social skills that they need both to defend themselves and to ensure that they deal with their emotional needs in a way that doesn't hurt others.

Because of those restraints, there's less opportunity for students to engage in their local community and create linkages with supports outside of the school. The heavy number of competency requirements leaves little opportunity to add innovative and interactive learning opportunities around bullying—and other social issues, frankly—or to have guest speakers and teachers from the community. Falconer suggested mandatory classroom management training and crisis intervention training for teachers. We haven't seen that, Speaker, and so the problems that Mr. Falconer was brought in to study dealing with violence in schools continue to be unaddressed.

Again, in the 2008 Falconer report, Roots of Youth Violence, he indicated that key to reducing and preventing violence in the schools was connection with community organizations, creating community hubs, funding community outreach workers. He recommended that government "enhance or create local centres, often based in or around schools, in which opportunities and services for youth and their families can be maximized, and community cohesion fostered….

"(1) Creating community hubs, wherever possible anchored in school facilities, not only to provide programs and services, but just as importantly to provide space and to facilitate connections."

The McGuinty government has put some funds in to support the use of schools for community organizations, but this, Speaker, is a far cry from developing community hubs: partnered and integrated use of schools to support the health of children and families. Only one in five elementary schools and one in three high schools has staff time allocated for school-community connections. We need to move towards a model of full-service schools, where students and families benefit from community resources and also contribute to the betterment of their community. Unfortunately, unlike other provinces, Ontario has still not developed a policy framework for community hubs.

The development of child and family centres in Ontario, a key part of the Pascal report, appears to be stalled. Local schools are slated to close in part because of an outdated funding formula which fails to provide the funds that schools need. So we're losing local schools that could be used as community hubs to promote safe and inclusive communities. I'll just note one, Speaker, because my guess is that other members of this chamber have received letters about it, and that's PCVS in Peterborough. A letter from a parent:

"As a parent the most frustrating part"—talking about the proposed closure of the school—"is not being able to explain the logistics of our KPR board's decision." Peterborough community vocational school, PCVS, "has the highest enrolment, lowest operating cost and lowest projected capital costs of the four high schools that were reviewed. The notion of a super school with increased bussing and therefore lower extracurricular activities is not what taxpayers want. PCVS is also the one 'safe school' in our district, having a gay-straight alliance and a higher-than-average number of gay students who've transferred into our school for acceptance.

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"The Peterborough Lakefield police department has publicly acknowledged that PCVS has the least involvement of all our high schools." Closing successful schools that are crucial to the functioning of communities does not help us deal with safety in our schools, does not help us support our children in building for the future that they deserve and need. This bill, without those supports and resources in the broader community, is going to be only a very, very small step towards what we need.

Speaker, there are concerns about enforcement. What will the Minister of Education do when schools or boards fail to follow the requirements of this act? And I look forward to hearing from the minister addressing that question.

Julian Falconer proposed the creation of a provincial school safety and equity officer to be a central repository for the reporting of serious issues of student safety. He also proposed whistle-blower protection for staff who anonymously report threats to school safety. He also echoed calls for a student hotline separate from the main school number or website. I note that the government has partnered with the Kids Help line, but it is not clear that that is sufficient, and frankly, again, talking to high

school students in my riding, they have real questions about Kids Help line as well.

I've outlined a number of problems here, Speaker, that are not addressed or inadequately addressed in this bill. As contentious as they may be, there is another issue that has taken on much more profile, and that takes me to the whole question of student clubs to reduce bullying, the most contentious section of this bill—and that is because one section has to do with the formation of gay-straight alliances in schools. This is the part of the bill that helps to address two issues: cultural change and building support networks for those who are under attack.

Culture change—because when authorities recognize and respect groups that are under attack, that are subjected to abusive action, it changes the dynamic of power. When authorities show respect for girls, when authorities show respect for those who have different skin colour, show respect for those who are disabled, show respect for our gay youth, that helps to shift the culture as much as the principal of my school coming in to talk to my class when I was in grade 3. It says the ground has to move. Allowing students in schools, under the sanction of the administration, to set up clubs says to all students that those students deserve respect; that the authorities in charge of the schools and the education system believe that those students deserve respect. Allowing students in schools to set up support networks gives them the security of being together and reduces the isolation that we all know can be, literally, deadly.

I want to look at this section in a bit more detail. Section 303.1:

"Every board shall support pupils who want to establish and lead,

"(a) activities or organizations that promote gender equity;

"(b) activities or organizations that promote anti-racism;

"(c) activities or organizations that promote the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people with disabilities; or

"(d) activities or organizations that promote the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, including organizations with the name gay-straight alliance or another name."

First of all, this section recognizes that bullies can use a variety of excuses for abusing people. Secondly, the section gives support to students who want to make schools better. Let's look at each category.

Activities or organizations that promote gender equity: Girls in high school are commonly subjected to sexual harassment. That is a reality of life in this province today. The safe schools action team report notes that almost half the girls surveyed in high school had to deal with some kind of sexual harassment. Some of them have to deal with very severe harassment. The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health did a study and produced a report that the safe schools action team used as their source material. They noted that some girls were severely affected psychologically. No one in this chamber can say that it doesn't happen. No one can say that girls who want to organize in schools shouldn't do that. They should be given support to come together, to make this kind of harassment socially unacceptable, and I'm sure all of us in here today would say that we should support this.

Racism: The bill says clubs can be organized around "activities or organizations that promote anti-racism." Well, Speaker, racism is a real problem here in Ontario. I'm not going to single out any particular region, but, interestingly, when I went through googling on the weekend, Lakehead Social Planning Council in Thunder Bay has a very useful, detailed fact sheet on fighting anti-aboriginal racism in local schools. They talk about the need to respect cultural differences and the need to take on racism.

No one in this building can deny the damage that racism has done. Look at what First Nations of this country endured at the hands of the residential school system. I was going through yesterday—I looked at an article in the Catholic Register on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, dealing with the aftermath of the residential schools. I have to say, a friend of mine, active in the United Church, spent a good number of years dealing with the consequences of those years and the need for that church to find the resources to try to do what it could to make amends.

I'll note what is said in the Catholic Register: "Though not an official recommendation of the interim report" of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "the commissioners do urge churches to be specific and forthcoming about what contributions they can make to rebuilding and restoring aboriginal culture, language and spirituality.

"'What role did the churches play in undoing (aboriginal culture)? And where does that lead in terms of considering what role the churches might play?' asked commissioner Marie Wilson.

"Teachers in church-run schools often ridiculed, belittled or denigrated traditional spirituality and belief systems, said Wilson.

"'There were very, very negative messages children were given about their own parents, about their parents' beliefs and belief systems,' she said.

"As aboriginal people seek to reassert their own identity, many people perceive a conflict between reclaiming traditional spirituality and membership in Christian churches, said Sinclair.

"'Many aboriginal people's connection to the churches remains strong,' he said. 'If an individual is going to remain connected to his church, the question arises about how you reconcile your return to tradition, language and culture—and in particular your traditional belief systems—while at the same time practising your Christian faith.'"

Well, Speaker, no one ever said that culture was easy. No one ever said that addressing problems in our culture and society was easy. But clearly, churches and the aboriginal community, through the Truth and Reconcilia-

tion Commission, are working on trying to find that solution, to reconcile the two different streams; to take what is in the past, learn from it, correct the damage that has been done, and move on, hopefully, with a solidarity that will enrich all. We have learned from our history—maybe imperfectly, maybe incompletely, but we have learned. No one can say that those who are suffering from racism, from bias shouldn't be able to organize and combat that bias.

1700

Subsection (c) related to student clubs: "activities or organizations that promote the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people with disabilities." You know, Speaker, we may talk less about this than we talk about racism or sexual harassment, but it's a very real problem. Again, looking through for documentation, Bloorview Kids Rehab has a number of articles on the bullying of the disabled. They report a 2007 review of international literature by Canadian authors finds kids with physical and developmental disabilities are at greater risk of being bullied. In a 2003 Canadian Council on Social Development study, 11% of children with special needs aged 10 to 11 reported that they were bullied "all or most of the time," versus 5% of peers without disabilities. A 1998 British study of 55 children with hemiplegia—paralysis of one side of the body—and 55 classmates without found that 45% of those with hemiplegia were moderately or severely victimized, compared to 13% of peers without disabilities. Can you imagine, Speaker, half your body paralyzed, and on the basis of being struck like that, subjected to abuse by the children that you interact with every day?

On the Bloorview website, they posted a story about a child dealing with bullying and disabilities. "When her daughter Sequoiah graduated from Bloorview's primary school to a regular grade 2 class in Burlington, Kerene Wallace was shocked to learn that Sequoiah was being bullied.

"'I expected that this might happen in the older grades, but these children were in grades 1 and 2,' Kerene says.

"Sequoiah was singled out because of her unusual walking gait, chronically teased on the playground, and made to hand over her snack every day. 'She was totally overwhelmed,' Kerene says.

"Children with physical and developmental disabilities are at greater risk of being bullied by peers, say the authors of a 2007 Canadian article that reviews the international literature on the topic."

I found this extraordinary. I guess it shouldn't be surprising, but it is horrifying. It is horrifying, Speaker. "In a follow-up study published in Child: Care, Health and Development, Holland Bloorview researchers asked the same group of youth with cerebral palsy how their participation in school life could be improved."

What about these disabled kids, these disabled children who are being bullied? "The students identified three key strategies: learn how to explain your disability to peers and teachers, rather than trying to hide it; improve disability and bullying awareness so students are more comfortable seeking help; and develop friendships by engaging in extracurricular activities. Research shows that having a support network of friends protects children from being isolated and bullied."

Speaker, there's nothing in that paragraph that doesn't apply to every other group of children subjected to bullying. Who amongst us would say that children with cerebral palsy or other disabilities shouldn't be given support and respect to live their lives? Who would reject the advice that has been given?

That takes me to the last category in this subsection of the bill: "(d) activities or organizations that promote the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, including organizations with the name gay-straight alliance or another name."

Everything that has been seen to be true for other responses to oppression based on gender, racism or ability is true when we come to sexual orientation. Yet, as you are well aware, Speaker, this is the most contentious item of the bill. We'll explore that, I am sure, as we go further through debate and through committee.

This bill supports formation of equity-promoting groups for gay and lesbian students but does not require school boards to allow students to determine the most appropriate name for the committee. Speaker, I think that is a change that is going to be necessary, to give the students the right to determine the names of their committees. This lack runs counter to the aim of creating schools which are accepting of all students and of stopping prejudice and discrimination.

Egale Canada says "GSAs ... demonstrably improve the lives of" lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and questioning "youth, increasing safety and improving their self-esteem."

By simply existing, GSAs present students "with the idea that LGBTQ identities have a place in the school, and society at large. Directly engaging LGBTQ youth and their allies within school, as well as those who are ambivalent regarding" those "themes, is an excellent means towards addressing school climate, isolation and promoting social connectedness...."

A recent study in California found GSA presence and participation in high school to be highly correlated with decreased depression, substance abuse and lifetime suicide attempts among LGBT young adults.

Now we started off this afternoon with the member from Nepean–Carleton talking about the tragic death of Jamie Hubley. I have to say his death was not one that was so rare that we could say there was no pattern. I wish—and this is tragic to say—I wish it was that rare.

In the Toronto Star last December, Antonia Zerbisias wrote about Support Our Youth, an organization in Toronto on Sherbourne Street that supports gay youth. In her article, she talked about how children are bullied and how gay children tend to be particularly picked out for abusive treatment.

She notes in her article: "'Numerous studies suggest that among lesbian, gay and bisexual youth, approximate-

ly 32 per cent contemplate or attempt suicide (compared to 7 per cent of all youth)' says a recent analysis by Toronto's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health." Those are very high numbers, Speaker. Those are numbers that every person in this room should keep in mind as we debate this bill, because the simple reality is that we're dealing with decisions that will affect life and death of our young people. Researchers and advocates say that "it's not their sexuality that leads these kids down a suicidal path—it's the stigma and discrimination they face in a heterosexual world.... Jamie Hubley, 15, killed himself" last fall. "Orangeville girlfriends Jeanine Blanchette, 21, and Chantal Dube, 17, were found in a wooded area in 2010, apparently after committing suicide with pills.

"In 2007, 13-year-old Shaquille Wisdom hung himself the day after he was stuffed into a garbage can at his Ajax high school. His homophobic bullies have never been outed—or punished."

All of us have a responsibility to protect our children no matter what colour they are, what gender they are, no matter what their gender orientation. All of us in this building, in this chamber, who have power, authority and responsibility have to protect our children. Speaker, we cannot abandon children to their fate; we have to act.

Bill 13 could be enhanced by incorporating elements of the Conservatives' anti-bullying private member's bill. Elements around public reporting, enhanced staff training, inclusion in curriculum, alternative programming—all those need to be taken into account as we get into committee, and everything that is going to advance the protection of children in this province that is incorporated in that private member's bill needs to be brought into the government's bill.

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Speaker, I want to summarize. Reducing and eliminating violence in schools requires addressing factors that contribute to violent behaviour: isolation, homelessness, poverty, inadequate housing, lack of community supports. All those factors have to be taken on.

This bill will not be successful unless it's integrated into a comprehensive strategy to reduce and eliminate violence. That means taking action to reduce poverty, not putting in place policies that exacerbate inequality and shift taxes from big corporations on to modest-income families.

That means ensuring that a full range of supports is available for gay and lesbian youth, including gay-straight alliances, something that the government and this bill have to ensure.

That means moving ahead with the implementation of a comprehensive curriculum to build student capacity to defer and prevent bullying. That means ensuring that there is adequate funding for alternative programming for at-risk children and youth, something the government, by delaying the review of the funding formula, has failed to ensure.

That means ensuring that if additional responsibilities are given to principals and teachers, then we need to provide the resources they need to carry out their responsibilities. That means reducing inequities in resources between schools, by reining in the growing reliance on fees and fundraising.

It means ensuring that the curriculum is based on development, knowledge and skills by broadening the set of measures by which we evaluate schools beyond the EQAO scores. That means ensuring that there's follow-up and consequences if boards fail to implement required measures. That means ensuring that monitoring and reporting requirements provide data on bullying that is valid, comprehensive and available to schools and the public.

It means ensuring that there's adequate school funding for proper supervision, staff training, student supports, so supports are in place to avoid, whenever possible, reliance on suspension and expulsion.

We need to move forward steadily. We need to move forward quickly to deal with bias, prejudice and violence in our schools. It is in our hands. We are charged with this task. We cannot drop it. We cannot let it go. We have to take it forward.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for Toronto–Danforth for his remarks, and thank him for his thoughtful advice and criticism with respect to the areas that this piece of legislation could be improved.

In the time I have, I want to speak to a couple of things. One, I want to recognize that Bill 13 is one piece of a comprehensive strategy that our government has advanced to see that all of our schools are safe and accepting places for all of our students. We understand the importance of the investments that we have previously made in children's mental health, which are coming into our schools right across the province right now. We know the important steps that need to be taken to build upon the work that we have done and the investments we have made with respect to safe schools.

We also know that there are other pieces to this puzzle, and that's why we have asked the curriculum council to review our curriculum across our schools, to understand how we can embed a culture of acceptance, tolerance, care and compassion and empathy into all of our schools at all of our grades, every single day of the year, for all of our students.

That's also why we have indicated that we'll be bringing forward an expert panel that can give us advice to determine what types of programs should be put in our schools to make sure that we are doing everything we can to protect our students.

My colleague talked about that we should never lose sight of advancing the protection of children, and I rise once again to say that, absolutely, we are deeply committed to Bill 13 and the comprehensive strategy it brings forward. But the purpose of a debate in the Legislature, the purpose of the public hearings we will have, the purpose of committee is to find every best idea that can

be brought forward to make this piece of legislation even stronger. We're committed to doing that, and I thank him for advice in that regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen to the thoughtful comments of the member from Toronto–Danforth, and I commend him for his genuine nature, the very balanced commentary and the fact that he introduced his remarks by commenting on the member from our side, our critic Lisa MacLeod from Nepean–Carleton. Going back to her comments and some of the issues that were raised, I believe that she was passionate and compassionate in her remarks, and I think the same tone would apply to the member from Toronto–Danforth.

Toward the end of his remarks, he did recognize the tragedy, that Jamie Hubley's death sort of frames how important being opposed to all forms of bullying is, and I think that's what Lisa was trying relentlessly to say. She was disappointed that the government wasn't prepared to work more co-operatively with the opposition.

Bill 14 by Elizabeth Witmer from Kitchener–Waterloo—she's tried to work with them, as well as our critic, and I'm sure the NDP as well, to find this balance that we're looking for. In itself, Mr. Speaker, that's a statement about respect. Respect for each other is important, and this sets the template here of this as either good policy or politics. We'll see.

The minister—I've watched several of her programs on television—seems rather intransigent in terms of certain kinds of deliverables. I don't know whether it's her particularly or Premier McGuinty. I believe it's the Premier and cabinet telling her what to do. But it's clear; I heard the member from Toronto–Danforth. The elimination of bullying—he said this bill is not successful unless it eliminates violence, and she tried to branch over to the fact that there are other factors. But the point here is that we are opposed to bullying and this bill simply doesn't get it done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to comment on my colleague from Toronto–Danforth, the Minister of Education and the member from Durham. Originally, when this came to the House for first reading and there was debate about whether we should work together on 13 and 14, I was relieved that on an issue that shouldn't be partisan, we were actually going to work together in a non-partisan fashion. This is one issue that shouldn't be partisan, because along with power, which we all have in this Parliament, comes responsibility. And on this issue, it seems we are quickly failing.

I believe that the member from Nepean was really, really compassionate. But honestly, if my kids were sitting where those pages are, they would have felt bullied. I wasn't in the House when that happened; I was watching it on the TV in my office. But I think that as a House, to talk about a bill about bullying and having children in the House with the bells—I just don't think that was respectful of the House or of the kids who are working here—

Mr. Jim McDonell: All we're asking for is an all-committee debate. They don't want to do that. This House voted for this. You guys voted with us.

Mr. John Vanthof: But we could have done it in some other way. I'm just saying that if those were my kids, I would have been offended. They aren't my kids, and I was still a bit offended. So I hope we can all really work together in the future and for—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm not saying whose fault it was. I'm just saying we can all work together. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

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Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: I appreciate the comments made by the member from Toronto–Danforth with respect to Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, as well as the minister's response and those of the members from Durham and Timiskaming–Cochrane.

I know that everyone in this House agrees that bullying in schools is a very serious issue and one that we must act on. We've all read the stories. As a mother, I'm saddened by the stories I read about and that I hear about in this House. I speak with my children about bullying and the many forms that it may take: written, oral and electronic.

Bill 13 is a world-class bill. The Accepting Schools Act is a key component of our plan to make all schools healthy, safe and inclusive, where all students feel accepted. Ontario is recognized across jurisdictions as leading the way with aggressive safe-school legislation, but we know there's more to do.

The legislation provides clear expectations and increased accountability. I see it as a complete bill. I cannot agree with the statement that was made earlier that this government has been selfish. This government is the first that has taken bullying as an issue that is very serious. Since 2004, we have invested $285 million in safe school initiatives. No other government has invested in safe schools.

I do agree that it is unfortunate that the opposition could not come to an agreement. Let's be clear: All of us want to end bullying and want to protect our children. It's unfortunate that recommended amendments could not be agreed to. It's unfortunate that, again, this is a case where the opposition suggests that unless it's a definition written by them, it can't be good. "Who's playing politics here?" is the question that I have this afternoon.

We all agree that our children are valued, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation and/or any element—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Your time's up, but thank you very much.

I return to the member for Toronto–Danforth, who has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My thanks to the Minister of Education, member for Durham, member for Timiskaming–

Cochrane and member from Windsor West for their comments.

One comment, Minister of Education: the suggestion of an expert panel—we've already had the safe schools action team; we've had the Falconer report; we had Roy McMurtry and Alvin Curling. We've had a lot of expert panels, so if you're going to suggest an expert panel, I think you're going to have to tell all of us here what added value they would bring. I'm not sure that's a productive line, but I look forward to hearing what you have to say.

To the member from Durham: When we talk about all forms of bullying, you're right. Everyone in this House would say that every instance of bullying and abusive behaviour is something that we reject. In our guts we reject it, not just intellectually. But I have to say that there are instances in which abusive behaviour is far more profound, and there are those who are subjected to it far more commonly and intensely as a group than others. It was very clear from the reading that I did that if you are disabled, let me tell you, you are more vulnerable and more likely to be bullied. We have to pay attention to those children. If you are part of the aboriginal community, you have gone through some very intense, abusive and difficult times that were not visited on non-aboriginals, the residential schools being an example. So yes, we want to deal with all bullying, but recognize that there are different circumstances for different groups.

Last, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane: You expressed well this whole question of us wanting to find the way forward. I'm not particularly picky about whether a bill is Liberal or Conservative or NDP on this issue. We're looking for the elements in the bills that will advance the situation of our children the most. That's what we care about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I'm pleased to speak today on behalf of the Minister of Education, my colleague, on an issue that is deeply personal to anyone who has ever been pushed on a stairway or had their lunch kicked across the floor, been trash-talked, harassed online or had to get into a physical fight that they never wanted to have.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Sorry to interrupt. I would ask the opposition members to allow the member for Mississauga–Streetsville to make his remarks. He's just getting started. I need to hear him.

I recognize again the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. I guess sometimes the bullying instinct is instinctive.

Even the former bullies themselves usually go on with their lives and pause to reflect back at a future time and ask themselves if something could have been done at that stage in life to have kept them from creating memories at which they themselves now wince and cringe when they remember pushing someone more vulnerable than themselves around at school.

Just as we can take pride in our progress as a society and how we reach out to newcomers to our country in helping them learn English, convert their experience and training to their Canadian or Ontario equivalent, restart their careers, settle their families and get on with life, we need to look into the mirror and make that type of progress in our schools that we've made in our communities and in our workplaces.

Discrimination is wrong, and we get that. So is bullying, and we'll work with parents, students, teachers and school administrators to prevent bullying and to create safe and accepting schools.

Children in Ontario suffer every day because of bullying. It is not a normal part of growing up. What is normal about watching as your brother gets beaten to a pulp and comes home in tears with his glasses smashed at the hands of a bunch of thugs who beat up on him just because they thought they could and nobody would do anything about it? Ontario says that no child, male or female, regardless of colour, religion, physical attribute or sexual orientation will suffer or feel fear or terror because of bullying.

Together, as adults, as parents, as students, as members of our communities and as a government, Ontarians want every student in our schools to be treated with equal respect and acceptance. Our schools will be places to see acceptance, inclusion and student safety in action, and to develop the habits of good citizenship and humanity that sustain us through adulthood.

Ontarians know that pushing people around, asserting power by dominating those more vulnerable, is not a simple problem, and our ministry does not prescribe a simple solution to bullying, but our students, their friends, brothers and sisters want action and they don't need excuses. That's why Ontario has introduced Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act.

This act will, if passed, help change attitudes and behaviours toward bullying, and it will help change the culture in society among youth and in our schools toward bullying. This legislation aims to make it better now, and progress starts with our schools, to ensure they remain the safest and the best in the world. Kids can't be expected to succeed in school if they don't feel safe, welcome and respected.

The Accepting Schools Act, if passed, will introduce tougher consequences for bullying and hate-motivated actions. As well, if passed, it will provide clear expectations and increased accountability for school boards and for bullies themselves. This includes a progressive discipline, which makes expulsion from school a possible consequence for bullying.

The Accepting Schools Act would require all schools to support students who want to lead activities that promote gender equity, anti-racism, understanding and respect for people with disabilities and people of all sexual orientations and gender identities, including groups with the name gay-straight alliance or another

name. We know that these kinds of activities help students find support and send a clear message that Ontario is serious about inclusion and respect.

Students need to know that they're not alone, and bullies need to know that their peers, their school, their family and their community will not tolerate them if they discriminate against anyone based on their race, gender, religion, sexual orientation or any other reason.

Discrimination goes beyond physical intimidation. Words can do the same damage to the mind and to one's lifetime self-esteem as fists do to their face. This makes bullying an issue for both genders. Kids that have been bullied need to know that support is there for them. Unfortunately, bullying sometimes goes unreported because students feel uncomfortable about speaking to an adult. That's why this legislation also provides for the creation of student-led support groups. Student-led groups provide a place for students to speak freely to their peers—peers who can often better understand what they're going through, perhaps because they have been there themselves or have even harmed others and come to regret it.

1730

If passed, the legislation would legally require school boards to have policies on bullying prevention and early intervention, progressive discipline, and equity and inclusive education. It would add a definition of "bullying" to the Education Act so that everyone understands what we mean, what we say, and that bullying has no place in Ontario schools.

This legislation would also designate the third week of every November as Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week to encourage and support existing activities in boards and within communities to make clear that bullying must end.

Our minister visited some schools during Bullying Awareness Week and saw first-hand some of the great work our schools are doing right now to raise awareness and to change students' behaviour. We want to continue supporting that.

In fact, Speaker, Ontario is actively recognizing and encouraging schools to create a safe, inclusive and healthy environment. Through the healthy schools recognition program, schools are recognized for their work in promoting a wide variety of healthy activities and behaviours, and this includes bullying prevention.

In 2011, the new Premier's Safe Schools Awards celebrated outstanding work done by some of the safe schools teams across Ontario. This legislation would continue to build on the existing work, like Ontario's safe schools strategy and the province's equity and inclusive education strategy.

If passed, the Accepting Schools Act would also require boards to report on progress against goals with specific measurement metrics for establishing a positive learning climate for all students, which would create greater transparency and accountability.

The act would require organizations using school property to follow standards consistent with the provincial code of conduct. The provincial code of conduct will set clear standards for behaviour for individual school boards to follow. It includes fundamental beliefs, like everyone has a responsibility to promote a safe environment; all members of the school community are to be treated with respect and dignity; everyone has a responsibility to resolve conflicts in a way that is civil and respectful; and everyone is expected to resolve conflicts without using violence either in word or in deed.

These changes to the legislation would be part of our commitment to make sure Ontario is taking a whole-community approach to making its schools more inclusive.

It's not enough to propose a new law in order to fix bullying. That's why this legislation is one part of a comprehensive action plan to address bullying in Ontario schools. The other steps recognize that we all have a role to play in making our schools safer. Schools and school boards alone are not singly responsible for addressing these complex societal issues. The other steps will build on Ontario's comprehensive efforts since 2003 to prevent bullying and to create a positive school environment.

We will focus on integrating mental health supports in schools as part of Ontario's 10-year mental health and addictions strategy and continued support for Kids Help Phone. The growing need to support kids with mental health challenges is clear. Mental health issues aren't identified early enough, and when they are, wait-lists for services are still too long. Too many children and youth still suffer in silence, and not enough families reach out for resources, help and comfort. To talk seriously about leaving no one behind and supporting student achievement, we need to better address mental health and addictions.

Some of those supports are already finding their way into our school boards. As part of the plan, Ontario will also create an Accepting Schools expert panel to provide advice about resources that focus on a whole-school approach, including prevention and early intervention.

The ministry has directed Ontario's curriculum council to report back later this year on strengthening equity and inclusive education principles, bullying prevention strategies across the curriculum, and suggesting ways to improve this learning in Ontario schools.

As part of the action plan, Ontario will also look at launching a public awareness campaign to stress that all Ontarians have a role in preventing and ending bullying.

We are not alone in thinking this way. We have the support of our partners. They recognize that we have more to do and that we need to stand up and work together, to stand together and to say together that bullying is not acceptable in our schools.

Bullying destroys students' well-being. Only by working together can we ensure a positive school climate where everyone—and this province means everyone—feels welcome and safe.

As adults, we know what children need to succeed. Research shows that students are more likely to succeed academically if they feel welcome, accepted and con-

nected at school. It doesn't come as a surprise. Whether it's physical or emotional, no one wants to go anywhere that brings feelings of pain and humiliation.

Some things that may seem small and trivial, like comments or language that we use, is where the most work needs to be done. Everyone knows that shoving or hitting another student is hurtful. We must ensure that everyone understands that language can also make someone feel hurt, alone or uncomfortable.

Adults know that they cannot concentrate and do our best work when we feel overwhelmed, stressed, afraid or worried. Why should students feel any different?

Students who feel rejection, exclusion and estrangement often suffer from behavioural problems in the classroom, lower interest in school, lower student achievement and higher dropout rates. For every student to succeed, we need to go beyond better academic results, lower class sizes and higher test scores. These statistical metrics are important and they've shown dramatic progress in Ontario. The graduation rate has increased for the seventh year in a row. It's now up to 82%, up from 68% in 2003. That number means an additional 93,000 students have graduated than would have if the rate had stayed at the 2003 level. Ontario was recently recognized in another OECD report for being a world leader in education.

We want to build on the gains that we've made and continue to support all of our students to succeed. That means we need to continue to focus on the conditions of success. That includes a safe, inclusive and healthy learning environment.

Bill 13 was created to help protect Ontario students, and we've received great support from many people. But most importantly, we've received support from those for whom this bill was created in the first place: students.

During the past several months, the Minister of Education has had the opportunity to meet with students to discuss their thoughts and feelings about bullying, about this bill and about school in general. It's been these personal stories of individual struggles and achievements that have been the most compelling. Students have told us that they need to attend schools where they feel safe, secure and comfortable, and students need to feel that they have the support that they need to succeed. That's important, because students should never feel that the only way to escape a bullying situation is to move to another school, to stop going to school, or even worse, to consider taking their own lives.

Feeling like you're being forced out of a school, a place that should feel like a welcoming community, isn't fair to anyone and it doesn't benefit anyone. Students need to know that when they cross the school threshold they're safe, they're welcome and they're accepted as the unique individuals that they are.

Just last week, several bright, passionate young people were here at Queen's Park to speak about bullying. They talked about how much they love their schools and they shared examples of the times their teachers and principals stepped in to address bullying. They also had some wrenching stories to tell about having been bullied. They talked about how important it was that their schools were a place where they felt like they belonged.

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That's why we as legislators must make every one of Ontario's schools a positive and accepting place for students to learn, to play and to grow. This bill is about every student, no matter who they are, where they came from, what they like or whom they hang around with. It's about what students need to feel safe and to feel welcome. It's about our responsibility to protect and educate our students in our schools.

We cannot do that without talking to students. They can tell us what's happening in our schools. By working together with students, we can make sure that we're on the right track. We have some of the best students in the world. We can benefit from that. They have a lot to offer.

We also need to let students know it's important to speak up against bullying. Our Minister of Education continues to deliver precisely that message to students.

Ontario's partners in education support this endeavour. Our schools are working hard to address bullying. The minister has visited schools doing outstanding work to prevent bullying and to ensure that students feel supported. The ministry is hearing stories from so many more. I want to thank the principals, teachers, school staff, especially the students, their parents and community partners for taking a stand on bullying.

When a child enters school, it's a stepping stone to their education, to their future and to our future. They need to know that it's their opportunity to learn and to grow.

We all have a role to play in standing up against bullying. Through this legislation, those of us sent here to share in governing Ontarians have stepped up to that responsibility.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to speak on some of the comments Mr. Delaney from Mississauga–Streetsville raised.

One in particular is the "working together" portion of his comments. You know, that's something that I've been hearing throughout my riding, that they'd like the government to work, obviously, with the opposition and adopt the recommendations that my colleague Elizabeth Witmer, from Kitchener–Waterloo, has put forward in Bill 14.

In fact, our local media, the Kitchener-Waterloo Record recently engaged in the debate itself and said that the government, in fact, would be wise to look at Ms. Witmer's bill with the thought of incorporating some of her suggestions.

I also want to raise some of the concerns—in fact, the overwhelming opposition concerns—from folks in my riding. I'll read you just a few here.

Hazel from Kitchener emailed me just recently to say that there are much better ways to help children. She's

concerned that if Bill 13 becomes law, it will only increase problems.

Manfred from Kitchener contacted my office to share his view that Bill 13 should not be passed as it stands today.

Constance, a retired teacher, in fact, from Kitchener, who's a strong advocate against bullying, feels that Bill 13 will do little to help children and youth suffering the devastating effects of bullying.

Monica, a mother of two young children from Wellesley, feels that Bill 13 will do nothing to help prevent bullying.

Sarah from New Hamburg wrote to me asking that, as her MPP, I vote against Bill 13 in favour of the PC anti-bullying bill, Bill 14. She's concerned that schools do not have the facilities to implement this bill.

Joyce from Petersburg is concerned also with Bill 13, and says that it was devised in a vacuum without consulting parents.

I just again want to reiterate some of those comments that Mr. Delaney talked about in "working together." I encourage the government to work together with this side of the House and incorporate, again, suggestions put forward in Bill 14 by our colleague Elizabeth Witmer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thanks for the opportunity to get up and speak to this issue, and thank you for the comments from the member from Mississauga—

Interjection.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Oh, sorry. I've got to move my chair.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes, you have to be at your seat. I'm sorry I didn't recognize that at the outset.

I again recognize the member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thanks to the member for his comments.

Just a couple of points I wanted to make. There's a lot of "mays" versus "shalls" in this legislation. If you look at section 301 of the act as being amended by adding the following subsections, the minister "may" establish policies and guidelines with respect to bullying, and "may" provide training, "may" provide resources. I think many of these "mays" need to be changed to "shalls," and training of teachers needs to be expanded beyond teachers. It needs to be extended to maintenance staff and support staff. They are the eyes and ears of the students when they are in the playground, when they're in the cafeteria, when they're in the hallway, even when they're in the washrooms of the schools. These are the people who can be bringing bullying issues to light in a very timely way.

I also wanted to talk about whether or not there needs to be something in the legislation similar to the Occupational Health and Safety Act that actually deals with violations of the act with respect to the safety and the health of workers. In those situations, in fact, hospitals and public offices who violate the act and do not provide for the health and safety of workers actually are fined. So there's monitoring that takes place. There are requirements for education, and there are fines that take place when employees and workers are injured in this province, so perhaps that would be an impetus for boards to actually implement policies and procedures and would assist in promoting the health and safety of our students in our schools.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Monsieur le Président, ça me fait plaisir de me lever aujourd'hui pour parler en faveur de ce projet de loi.

This bullying problem in schools is very close to my heart. Two of my nieces were bullied—imagine, one in kindergarten and the other one in high school. They were both bullied differently, but it changed their lives. It's changed their lives altogether.

In the first case, the school reacted very positively. They called everyone together, the parents of this boy who was the bully and my sister and her husband. They dealt with it, and it was resolved in no time.

In the second case, the school did not react properly, so my other niece was on suicide watch for quite some time because of what she was going through. They had to move her to another high school, and when it is the only high school in the area, they have to move her two hours away. You know, she had to find an apartment for one year in high school. It's a bit young to have your own apartment.

I hope that in this House we will all work together to make sure that this does not happen to one more kid. We should put aside our differences as parties. We should all work to make sure that we have a strong piece of legislation and everybody knows their own responsibility.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's an honour to get up to talk to the bill today. I hear from the member from Mississauga–Streetsville about the need to co-operate, and I can't agree more. I guess I find it disappointing that the three parties were working together on a bill that would truly look at the issues here, only to find out at the last moment that another bill was being introduced. I think it just shows that when we're working as a group, things have changed. I think, as I heard earlier, there are likely many people in this House who were bullied at one time. But bullying has changed; there are different things we have to worry about. It speaks to the need of working together to come up with a—a serious issue here that needs some serious attention.

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I guess the actions we see around here really speak of the functioning of this House, and what we've seen since my relatively short time here—I think if we're truly concerned about trying to meet the needs—I mean, we've

had some support from the elementary school teachers, that are on our side. We've seen this bill that's being proposed really drive some wedges between some of the groups that are coming in, that are concerned about bullying—but have pulled out the worst aspects about what we see from our society.

I think if they really, truly want to work together, come and support Bill 14 and work together. Send it to the committee, as we've asked, and as was agreed to up front. I'm really wondering myself, what changed course here? Why all of a sudden the change? If we're talking about another issue coming up later this week where they're looking for support, well, if they're really truly looking for support—let us be able to trust the other side. Let's work together for a common good. We're wanting to see some results, and we look forward to Bill 14 going through.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay, that concludes the time for questions and comments. I return now to the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I thank the members for their comments.

To the member for Kitchener–Conestoga: Speaker, the member will have an opportunity to debate Bill 14 at another time; this debate is about Bill 13. But if the member still wants to talk about contributing to Bill 13, will he both table the entire letters that he was reading and specifically address homophobia and advocate the freedom of students to discuss issues of their sexuality in a safe environment at their school?

I thank the member from Welland. I hear your comments, and perhaps they can be discussed in terms of your suggestions to some of the supporting regulations around Bill 13.

To the member for Ottawa–Vanier: The member for Ottawa–Vanier understands that you don't fight fire with fire; you fight fire with water. This bill's measures represent the ability of schools to quench the fires of bullying with the water of countermeasures and understanding.

To the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry: Will the member please advocate within his caucus to set ideology aside, which is something that I'm sure he can do, and to remember that we were all sent here to work together for the best good of our province and our schools and our students, and we have before us the measures to do it. If that member and his caucus put their heads together and park the ideology at the door, I am personally very confident that we can achieve exactly what we have both set out to achieve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am honoured to rise today to speak to the issue of bullying and specifically to Bill 13. We don't have much time left for debate today. Unfortunately, I won't be able to speak fully to this issue, but that is the way of the clock, and I will come back another time to finish my debate.

It is certainly a measure of how important the issue of bullying is in the province of Ontario today, and prevention of bullying, that we actually have two bills before the Legislature at the same time. In fact, these bills—Bill 13, which is the government bill, and Bill 14, which is a private member's bill brought forward by my friend and colleague the member from Kitchener–Waterloo—were brought forward on the same day, November 30, 2011.

I can say that Bill 14 is the result of a very comprehensive investigation that the member from Kitchener–Waterloo entered into. As you know, she is also a former Minister of Education as well as a teacher and a school board trustee, so she certainly knows whereof she speaks. She entered into extensive consultations with school personnel, with parents, with teachers and, most importantly, with students. The result, in my view, is a very thoughtful and comprehensive bill that certainly is well worth our time to discuss here in this Legislature.

I firmly believe that Bill 14—as opposed to the government bill—would, if passed, have a significant impact in reducing bullying across the province. I will return to a comparison of the relative merits of Bill 13 and Bill 14, Mr. Speaker, but before I do, I would just like to speak for a few moments on the need for a concentrated effort to reduce bullying in the province of Ontario.

Bullying, as we have heard today, has reached an unprecedented level and has certainly far surpassed the old "sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me" kind of mentality. That mostly happened when I was young.

Bullying now has reached unprecedented levels and has become very sophisticated, and it has become something that can be done across the Web. Cyberbullying is becoming very popular with some people. As a result, we see many young people who are being tormented to the point of suicide because they can't bear to deal with their tormentors any longer.

Unfortunately, we have had two very tragic situations that have happened in the province of Ontario within the last year, where two young people did tragically take their own lives.

Last October, a young man named Jamie Hubley committed suicide after enduring years of torment simply because he was gay. In December, Jamie's parents, Allan and Wendy Hubley, came to Queen's Park to discuss their commitment to action on the anti-bullying issue despite their grief.

I did have the opportunity to meet with Mr. and Mrs. Hubley, along with Lisa MacLeod and Elizabeth Witmer. We assured them at that time that we would do everything we could do to ensure that legislation would be passed that would protect all of our children from bullying.

In September 2011, Mitchell Wilson, an 11-year-old boy from Pickering, also took his own life on the eve of being required to testify in court against another older boy who mugged him and stole his iPhone.

Mitchell suffered from muscular dystrophy, as a result of which he had a slow and laboured gait. The alleged mugger was arrested the day after the attack, charged

with assault and was removed from the school. Yet his friends remained and they continued to taunt Mitchell—taunting him and baiting him on the way home from school.

The spectre of the act haunted Mitchell and he began to suffer severe panic and anxiety attacks. A downward spiral started, which culminated in Mitchell's suicide. Sadly, this is not unusual. Suicide is the second-leading cause of death among 10- to 24-year olds.

Mitchell's father, like Mr. and Mrs. Hubley, is hoping that by speaking to the media, visiting schools and telling Mitchell's story he can prevent other children from being bullied and educate people about what it's like to have a disability. I think that's one area that we really haven't touched on enough in all the debate, although I recognize that many members, particularly the member from Danforth, commented on the issues involving children with disabilities and what many of them have to live through. We need to make sure that that gets highlighted even more in this legislation as we go forward.

Mr. Speaker, we also need to make sure that we can support these brave parents who have come forward despite their grief to prevent this from happening to any other child.

I would now like to deal with the relative merit of Bills 13 and 14. At the outset, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to indicate that upon introduction of both of these bills into the Legislature on November 30, 2011, all parties sought the opportunity to bring the two bills together, with a view to passing the strongest anti-bullying legislation possible. Yet without warning, the McGuinty Liberal government suddenly and unilaterally decided to bring Bill 13 forward for debate today, thereby preventing any possible merging of the bills.

In our view, this is reneging on the original agreement and certainly speaks against what many members have talked about in the Legislature, about how we need to have the strongest bill possible and how we need to put them all together.

I'm disappointed in this, Mr. Speaker, principally because this did give us a true chance to merge these bills, and now we're not going to be able to. We're going to have to choose one bill over the other. People's attitudes get hardened one way or the other and it makes it even more difficult to try and work collaboratively in the spirit of this legislation, which is to bring forward a strong anti-bullying bill.

I think it's time to stop at this point for today, Mr. Speaker. Am I correct?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm reluctant to interrupt, but I must do so.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 27 March 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 27 mars 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding House proceedings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we have unanimous consent? We have the agreement.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I move that notwithstanding standing order 58(b), when the House recesses at the end of the morning sitting today it shall stand recessed until 4 p.m., at which time government notice of motion number 20 shall be called.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT ACT (RENT INCREASE GUIDELINE), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION (TAUX LÉGAL D'AUGMENTATION DES LOYERS)

Ms. Wynne moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline / Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne le taux légal d'augmentation des loyers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to you on second reading of Bill 19, our government's proposed amendment to the rent increase guideline under the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006.

Je prends la parole aujourd'hui au nom du quelque million de ménages de cette province qui louent un logement : les familles et les particuliers de tous les coins de l'Ontario qui, chaque jour, cherchent à boucler leur budget, c'est-à-dire à payer leur loyer et à subvenir à leurs besoins quotidiens.

I speak to you in support of approximately a million rental households across the province, the families and individuals throughout Ontario who are struggling each day to balance the rent with the cost of daily life. This legislation would mean that, beginning in 2013, the rent increase guideline would be capped at 2.5% and would not fall below 1%.

Our approach would reduce volatility. It would provide stability and predictability for both renters and landlords while recognizing that modest rent increases are necessary to ensure that landlords can properly maintain their rental properties. So we understand that there's a balance that has to be struck, and in terms of the rental community that is what we have tried to do all along since we came to office in 2003. At this point, what we believe is that by stabilizing the rent increase guideline, we'd help people find certainty in their housing costs, and that would allow them to focus on their jobs or their education.

Madam Speaker, I have to say that I'm actually particularly pleased to be introducing and beginning to speak about this legislation today. It is budget day in Ontario, and I think it's important that we recognize that the business of governing and the business of establishing policies that work for people across the province is complex. It's not best driven, in my opinion, by ideology, and I think this piece of legislation demonstrates that we understand that that balance needs to be reached. Our budget today will further demonstrate that we understand the complexity of the public policy needs and the economic realities across the province. This legislation recognizes the economic realities, the financial realities, that people in the province, particularly renters, deal with every day.

Mr. Jeff Leal: A practical approach.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Exactly; a practical approach, says the member for Peterborough.

My remarks today are all in the context of the central importance of housing in the lives of everyone living in our communities. My responsibility as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is to work with communities, to work with the federal government, to work with my colleague ministers and with advocates to improve the housing options and opportunities for Ontarians.

Of course, housing is about bricks and mortar, it's about frame or glass, but it's larger than that. It is about adequacy of housing, and adequacy of housing in

community is a key indicator of the well-being of that community.

John Lorinc, who's a Toronto journalist, in his book Cities, of which I have a pre-publication copy—

Interjection: Oh, how did you get that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It came out some time ago, but I was looking at it last night, and the copy I have is a pre-publication copy.

Anyway, he points out the close link between urban poverty and the supply of affordable housing. Lorinc talks about the history of government involved in urban housing, and he says, "....when municipal agencies began cleaning up slums and building modern sanitation systems to reduce the threat of infectious disease. By the 1920s, governments started taking an even more active role, with the development of social housing." I think we tend to forget sometimes that there was a time not long ago when government didn't see a role for itself in monitoring available housing, let alone partnering to build housing.

We take that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask those members having conversations to either take them out of the chamber or reduce the level of noise.

Minister, please continue.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. One does get used to speaking over the buzz in this place, but I appreciate your intervention.

We tend to forget that there was a time when government did not take that responsibility as part of what it was expected to do, but we do. We think it's a very important aspect of our responsibility as a government to monitor the housing supply in the province, to make sure that there is a balance, and Bill 19 is one aspect of that responsibility. So as we monitor the availability of affordable housing and the costs that Ontarians are bearing, let me talk a little bit more about the background of Bill 19.

There are families all across Ontario who struggle to pay their rent and cover the costs of the basic necessities of life. Julia and David's family are an example. They rent a home in Brampton with their three young children. Keisha is eight months old, Rebecca is four years old and Timothy is six years old. David works full-time at a local car manufacturer, and Julia stays at home and works as a mom.

The family's budget is tight. Julia says that even an increase in rent of $30 would have a huge impact on her family. It would make it hard for the family to buy the things that their children need for school, save for a long-term goal of buying their own home and save for emergencies. She says that the most important thing is to give her children a sense of belonging, a sense of safety, a sense of home.

I think Julia and David's story demonstrates that stable and affordable rent is an important factor in allowing people to realize their full potential and to help build viable, sustainable, healthy communities where people can live and work and raise families. I think everyone in this House, Madam Speaker, would agree that that is critical to all Ontarians and to our communities. Whether you are part of a struggling family or not, whether you are a renter or not, I think it's important to all of us that we have a rational regime in terms of tenants' expectations.

0910

Let me talk a little bit about Ontario's history of rent regulation. Madam Speaker, rent controls or rent increase guidelines have existed in Ontario's rental housing sector since 1975.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Bill Davis brought them in.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's right. Since that time, there have been a number of statutes that have regulated rents and rental increases in rental housing. Those include the Tenant Protection Act, 1997, which was in effect from June 17, 1998, to January 30, 2007; and the Rent Control Act, 1992, which was in effect from August 10, 1992, to June 16, 1998.

Each one of those statutes established its own regime or formula which spelled out how rent regulation and increases would be applied to Ontario's rental housing sector. Some of these statutes allowed the government to establish arbitrary caps on rent increases; others developed complex formulas that, in effect, lacked transparency and objectivity.

One of the most prominent issues in the 2003 provincial election campaign for me was the issue of escalating rent. I think for many of us who have a high percentage of rental properties in our ridings, 2003 was really a watershed year in terms of those rent increases. As a candidate in Don Valley West, where almost half the residents live in rental housing, I encountered the issue of high rents at thousands of doors. We committed in that election campaign to introduce legislation to address those concerns.

So the Residential Tenancies Act, in 2006, was introduced under our government, under Premier McGuinty. It was in fact Ontario's first piece of residential housing legislation to establish a fair, transparent and objective measure to calculate annual rental increases, removing the arbitrary measures that had been in place. I think the member for Scarborough—

Hon. Brad Duguid: Centre.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —Centre was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing at the time, and I know that there were many members in the House who worked on that piece of legislation.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Brad Duguid played a big role in that one.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: He played a very big role in that.

The rent increase guideline is calculated under the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, and is based on the Ontario consumer price index, which is calculated by Statistics Canada. The rent increase guideline is the maximum amount that most landlords can increase a

tenant's rent during the year without making an application to the Landlord and Tenant Board, and that's an important caveat. In most cases, the rent for a unit can be increased if at least 12 months have passed since the tenant first moved in or since his or her last rent increase. The tenant must be given proper written notice of the rental increase at least 90 days before the rent increase takes place. The rent increase guideline applies to most private residential rental accommodation covered by the RTA, the Residential Tenancies Act, including rented singles and semis, basement apartments, rented condo units, and special tenancies such care homes and mobile homes.

Monsieur le Président, la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation a marqué l'avènement d'une nouvelle ère en ce qui touche la protection des locataires et des propriétaires.

It gives tenants, who are often our most vulnerable residents, fair rent increases while keeping our rental housing market strong. The result is, I believe, stronger communities that offer a range of housing choices that meets the diverse needs of Ontarians.

Interjection: It's about balance.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's about balance.

The RTA, 2006, replaced the Tenant Protection Act of 1997, and it was an attempt to level the playing field so that both sides could deal with each other in a fair and reasonable manner and fix the problems associated with the previous act. The Residential Tenancies Act established a fairer, more responsive rental housing system that helps, as I say, build those stronger communities around the province.

The RTA represented a culmination of a two-year dialogue between our government and tenants and landlords. From 2004-05, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing undertook a comprehensive consultation process and circulated a consultation paper with a questionnaire on key issues. There were thousands of responses, e-mails and phone inquiries. There were 10 town hall meetings held in Toronto, Kitchener, London, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Kingston and Hamilton, and about 1,500 people attended.

The point of my outlining that is that there was a lot of discussion about that piece of legislation, what went into it and what was needed. Concerns were raised by both tenants and landlords, including tenants being evicted without a hearing, the issues of building maintenance and having work orders dealt with, rising utility costs, above-guideline increases, vandalism, and issues related to mobile and care homes. Those were all issues that had been raised with us during and before the 2003 election.

The RTA, the Residential Tenancies Act, has two goals: balanced protection for both landlords and tenants, and promoting a healthy investment climate, because we recognize that there need to be more rental units built and we want that development climate to exist. That ensures fair rents for tenants and helps landlords protect their investment, and helps to keep the rental housing market strong. For tenants, it means better-maintained buildings, fair annual rent increases and a new system to deal with above-guideline increases for utilities and capital expenditures.

Under this piece of legislation, tenants are no longer subjected to a default eviction process, as they were under the previous legislation. Too often, what happened under the former legislation was that individuals and families, including vulnerable children and seniors, were being evicted without a mediation or a hearing, and that's no longer the case. The RTA requires adjudicators to consider the tenant's circumstances in deciding whether to grant an eviction for failure to pay rent. Tenants can also raise related claims at their hearings for rent arrears such as maintenance problems in their buildings, and that is, as we know—those of us who have many tenants in our ridings, we know that those maintenance issues can be the presenting issue in the relationship between tenants and landlords.

At the same time, the legislation provides much better protection for landlords against problem tenants, because there's the balance, you know? We have to make sure that landlords are not facing unreasonable constraints as they deal with tenants who may not be behaving in the way that they should. So a fast-track eviction process deals with tenants who cause wilful damage or who are interfering with the reasonable enjoyment of a landlord's own home. The time required to get an eviction order for these problem tenants is now cut approximately in half, and in the case of excessive wilful damage or serious threats to health and safety, eviction orders can be issued immediately. So that was an improvement for landlords in those serious situations.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Especially small landlords.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Small landlords—the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation remarks that it's often small landlords who have the most concerns, and we recognize that.

Landlords, under this legislation, can also continue to increase rents through the above-guideline rent increase process. They could also continue to be able to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board for above-guideline rent increases for extraordinary increases in the cost of municipal taxes and charges or utilities, eligible capital expenditures and increases in operating costs related to security services. So there was a recognition within the legislation that those situations would require that the landlord go to the Landlord and Tenant Board in order to get an above-guideline increase. They could also be able to continue to negotiate starting rents with new tenants, and these measures I think demonstrated our government's recognition of the valuable contribution that landlords make to the rental housing market in Ontario.

The RTA also expanded rent discounting rules. Landlords can provide discounts of up to three months' rent per year, and that's a particularly useful marketing tool in times of high vacancy rates.

Also, with the RTA, the name of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal changed to the Landlord and Tenant Board, and what that did was it better reflected the

mandate of enhanced customer service and accessibility for tenants and landlords. With the proclamation of the RTA, most administrative fees were reduced significantly.

The dialogue between our government and tenants and landlords has helped to determine the best way, I think, to promote a sustainable, well-maintained supply of rental housing. We took our time to get it right because strong communities are central to everything that government does, and a strong rental housing market is essential to that building of stronger communities. These consultations ensured that we achieved a fair approach to protect tenants while promoting a stable and affordable rental housing market.

The act, we believe, does not at this time need significant or deep reform, but as the circumstances change for those who rent, we'll listen. We'll be open to amending the legislation when necessary, but at this point we're going to focus on one particular area. We're going to take action right now—and that's what Bill 19 is—to protect Ontarians from potential guidelines that may not reflect the economic circumstances of those who rent.

0920

You'll remember I said that in the RTA, the rent increase guideline was tied to the Ontario CPI, the consumer price index. But what we have heard is that too many families are not able to keep up with inflation, that they are worried about their rents increasing beyond their ability to pay and that drastic increases from one year to the next are not manageable for many tenants. Those spikes are difficult for tenants to manage. That's why we're taking this action.

Our proposed amendment is an example of that balanced approach that I have outlined. If it were passed, it would keep rent affordable and would provide certainty. It would provide some stability that I think is critical.

As I mentioned, Madam Speaker, the proposed legislation, if passed, would mean that the annual rent increase guideline would be capped at 2.5%. So the ceiling would be 2.5%, and it would never fall below 1%. We're proposing a ceiling and a floor no lower than 1% and no higher than 2.5%. The annual rent increase guideline would continue to be based on Ontario's consumer price index, which I think gives that objective and transparent measure that provides the predictability and the stability.

Comme je l'ai aussi dit, cette approche créera plus de certitude pour les locataires. Elle permettra aux loyers de demeurer abordables et stables et elle sera également avantageuse pour les propriétaires qui seront assurés d'un rendement juste sur leurs investissements, ce qui leur permettra d'entretenir convenablement leurs immeubles locatifs.

As I said, what this approach would do is provide tenants with greater certainty. It would also allow for more affordable and stable rents, and landlords would benefit by being assured of a fair return so they can properly maintain their rental properties.

One of the things I say to tenants on this issue is that we want to make sure that landlords are able to maintain their properties, because it doesn't help anyone if properties are not upgraded, if there aren't capital expenditures, so it's important to keep that possibility in place.

We're also proposing that the act be amended to require that the annual rent increase guideline formula be reviewed every four years, because when we first put it in place, we thought that it would be able to be maintained throughout, but what we realize now is that as economic conditions change, we need to be able to review the rent increase guidelines. So we've put that measure into this legislation.

I want to assure landlords that the proposed amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act would, if passed, not be retroactive. We understand that the 2012 rent increase guideline came into effect on January 1, 2012, and many landlords have already begun to collect lawful 2012 rent increases. The proposed new guideline formula, if passed during the spring, during this legislative session, would not take effect until 2013. I've had tenants say to me, "Why wouldn't it take effect right now?" I think we have to recognize that landlords planned for the 2012 increase and they have begun to collect rent, so that's only fair.

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's got to be fair.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Exactly.

I noted at the beginning of my remarks that it's budget day. All members of this House know that we are facing economic challenges, both in Ontario and globally, and that's why the government is committed to working hard to create jobs and continue to strengthen the economy. That's really our primary objective at this juncture in our history. Our government's balanced approach, I think seen in this amendment, if passed, would help to make rents more affordable, lessen and provide certainty for tenants and allow them to focus on their jobs or education. Landlords large and small are important partners in delivering quality rental housing, and that's why our approach would allow landlords to maintain their properties while still allowing them to see a return on their investments.

Landlords would be assured of an increase of at least 1% per year, remembering that they received less than that last year—if you'll remember, the rent increase guideline last year was 0.7%.

Our proposed amendment represents a fair and balanced approach and would be aligned with the average guideline increase over the past five years, which has been 1.7%, and over the past 10 years it has been 2.1%. So the numbers that we have landed on, the 2.5% ceiling and the 1% floor, are not arbitrary. They're based on what we've seen the averages to be over recent history. These guidelines have allowed landlords to maintain their properties while still allowing them to see a return on their investment, and we anticipate that the revised guideline, if passed, would see these conditions

continue and provide greater certainty for both landlords and tenants.

As I've said, landlords would retain the ability to apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board for increases above the guideline for costs associated with an extraordinary increase in the cost for municipal taxes, charges and utilities, or both; eligible capital expenditures; and increases and operating costs related to security services.

So what does this mean for the province? Sur une échelle plus large, nous croyons que la mesure législative proposée est dans l'intérêt des personnes les plus vulnérables de notre province. L'automne dernier, le premier ministre s'est engagé à améliorer la loi pour que les augmentations de loyer correspondent à la réalité vécue par les locataires.

On a larger scale, we believe that this proposed legislation will help those most vulnerable in our province. Last fall, the Premier committed to fixing the legislation so that the increase would be in line with what's happening in the real world for renters. A picture of that real world is captured in the Poverty by Postal Code 2: Vertical Poverty study released by the United Way in January 2011. Almost half of the tenants interviewed in that study said that they worry about paying the rent each month. One of four tenants interviewed say they do without things they need every month to pay the rent. One in three say that they and their families do without other necessities some months of the year.

As far as we're concerned, Madam Speaker, that's unacceptable. As stewards of the future, we need to act now to help make housing more affordable and improve the quality of life of those most vulnerable. Affordable, stable and secure housing has a direct impact on a person's health, education and economic status. It plays a strong role in addressing poverty and providing families with a decent standard of living. According to the Canadian Council on Social Development, children living in adequate housing have significantly higher overall health and do better in school than those in poor housing conditions, so I'm a firm believer that when we get people into safe and affordable housing we're helping the entire community and we're giving particularly the children in those families a better future and a more aspirational outlook. Their communities become places in which people can take pride and where they can feel more secure.

Yesterday, Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to speak with members of the Halton Poverty Roundtable's housing forum, and that group and so many communities around the province are having important discussions. They're doing the necessary local planning to incorporate housing initiatives into their overall poverty reduction strategies, because I don't believe we can talk about poverty just in terms of family income or individual income. We have to talk about poverty in a much broader way, and housing is a central part of that. And that work at the local level is critical, in addition to the work at the provincial level. It makes clear the connections between the adequacy of housing and the reduction of poverty.

One of the things I said at the roundtable yesterday was that there has been and there needs to be an interministerial conversation about poverty reduction at the provincial level, but that needs to be reflected at the local level, as all of the community groups and individuals and agencies work together to put together plans.

From a broader perspective, investment in the housing sector provides employment and stimulates economic activity, and I'm really pleased to be part of a government that values and respects the need for all families to have a safe, healthy, affordable place to call home.

So we've got to work together. There's more to be done. We know that for housing to be affordable, families can really not afford to pay more than about 30% of their pre-tax income for housing. According to Stats Canada's 2006 census, approximately one in three renters in Ontario are in what's called core housing need: that is, households or persons that spend more than 30% on shelter. Approximately one in eight renters is in severe housing need, meaning they spend at least half their income on shelter. Those families, as you can imagine, Madam Speaker, have very little left over to cover the costs of basic needs: clothing, food and medical costs. All of that can affect a family's standard of living, their productivity, and it can limit even our national competitiveness.

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The current situation for tenants today is reflected in the fall 2011 rental market survey released by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. The survey reported that the average rent of a two-bedroom unit across the province rose by 2.2%, from $980 in October 2010 to over $1,000 in October 2011. The survey also found that the average vacancy rate in the province fell from 2.9% in October 2010 to 2.2% in October 2011.

So with rents rising and the availability of rental housing decreasing, there's a need for affordable housing in this province, and that's why our government is taking action. That's why we're going to, through this bill, if it's passed, stabilize the rent increase guideline, and it's part of the reason that we introduced our long-term affordable housing strategy. We can fix particular issues in the moment, but we need a long-term plan, and that's what our long-term affordable housing strategy is.

I just want to quickly talk about how the new calculation will work, by way of an example. We imagine a tenant who's earning just over $29,000 a year. The tenant is currently paying $800 a month for her apartment unit. She comes home on August 1 this summer and finds a notice from her landlord in her mailbox that says her rent is going to be up in three months' time, which can never be good news.

Now, Madam Speaker, there are two points I want to make clear at this point in the story. First of all, the tenant's lease runs from November 1 to November 1 each year. The second point is that by providing the tenant with notice on August 1, the landlord has fully complied

with the legislation by providing at least 90 days' notice. So on November 1, our tenant's monthly rent will increase by the amount allowed by the current rent increase guideline.

The next step is to calculate the percentage increase that the landlord will be allowed to raise the rent. In Ontario, Stats Canada has calculated that the CPI for the previous 12 months is 2.7%; we're imagining that. The provincial guideline that would be established by our proposed legislation is 2.5%. What that means for our tenant is that her rent can only be increased by a maximum of 2.5% when she renews her lease in November, were our legislation to pass. So instead of paying $800 a month, the most our tenant would be paying is $820 a month. That $20 increase represents the maximum 2.5% which the landlord was allowed to raise the rent.

Pat Moore is a co-op tenant, and in fact she's a community activist who has supported tenants for years in the Thorncliffe Park and Flemingdon part of Toronto. She says, "We're living in a time of great uncertainty and this rent increase guideline will help me and my family plan ahead. It will help reduce the anxiety associated with speculation and give us a little peace of mind." So when tenants can anticipate what the rent increase will be, they know what to expect and they can prepare in advance.

Here's another example, Madam Speaker. In this example, Stats Canada has calculated that the consumer price index for Ontario is 2.3%. Well, 2.3% is less than the upper threshold of 2.5%, and it's also more than the 1%. In that case, the landlord is allowed to raise the tenant's monthly rent by a maximum of 2.3%. They wouldn't be allowed to go up to 2.5%, because the CPI indicates that 2.3% is the amount. So on November 1, the landlord would be able to raise the rent by 2.3%, and that would work out to a maximum monthly rent payment of $818.40.

The final example I want to give is where Stats Canada pegs the CPI at less than 1%, so that's 0.9%, for example. Right away, we notice that's lower than the 1%. What happens in that case is that the rent increase guideline holds the annual rent increases to between 1% and 2.5%. So the landlord would be allowed to charge an increase of 1%, which would mean that the new rent that the tenant would be paying would be $808—$8 being 1% of $800. So $808 would be the maximum that the landlord would be able to charge. Those are three scenarios that could be played out.

Mr. Jeff Leal: They'd understand that math—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: They would.

Madam Speaker, another tenant advocate, Masood Alam, has said that—he's a representative, actually, of Morguard tenants' association in my riding of Don Valley West. He's expressed concern about how unpredictable rent increases can be challenging for members of his community. He said, "This year, landlords could increase rent up to 3.1%, which is not affordable to the majority of tenants living in the Thorncliffe Park area. In our community, there are situations where, due to unemployment or underemployed situations, up to 70% of the tenant's net income can go towards their rent. This leaves them with very little money to fulfill their family's needs. Putting a cap on rent increases will help these families and give them some relief."

So to summarize, Madam Speaker, the calculation of the proposed rent increase guideline will continue to be based on the Ontario consumer price index, but the range would, if this legislation passes, now be limited to between 1% and 2.5%. Within that range, the allowable maximum rent increase allowed under the rent increase guideline matches the Ontario consumer price index. The other two possible scenarios are when the CPI, as calculated by Stats Canada, is below 1% or above the 2.5% threshold of our range. Landlords are protected when Ontario's inflation is low, and tenants would be protected when inflationary shock threatens to make their rents unaffordable. That's what this legislation is about.

I said, Madam Speaker, that I was talking about this legislation in the context of the broader issues of affordable housing, in the broader issues, I would suggest, of poverty reduction. December 2011 marked the third anniversary of the poverty reduction strategy that our government put in place, meaning that we've passed the halfway point to its promised target date of reducing child poverty by 25% by December 2013.

I have to say, Madam Speaker, much has happened since December 4, 2008, which is the date our Ontario government produced its first five-year poverty reduction commitment. But especially in light of ongoing economic turmoil, we recognize that much more needs to be done.

Our government has focused its efforts primarily on children and families, but we've also taken steps to create opportunity for those most adversely affected by the economic downturn and to build the economic and social foundations to achieve our poverty reduction goals. We do understand that the economic downturn has affected us all, but primarily people who live in more marginal and vulnerable circumstances.

Our report Common Ground: A Strategy for Moving Forward on Poverty Reduction reviews the government's progress, and I just want to highlight a few aspects of that. From 2008 to 2009, the first year of the poverty reduction strategy, 20,000 children moved out of poverty. This means over 4% fewer children living in poverty as we've measured it since we introduced the strategy. We had a definition of poverty, we took a benchmark, and since that benchmark was put in place, 20,000 children have moved out of that definition of poverty. I say that because I recognize that even those children still have needs; there's still more that we can aspire to for those kids.

But the fact is that they are doing better than they were before we put our initiatives in place. Poverty rates for single-mom-led households dropped from 43% in 2008 to 35% in 2009. The number of children living in households that could not afford two or more essential items has dropped from 12% in 2008 to less than 9% in 2009. And that measure was, could families afford to buy

necessary winter clothing, could they afford to have friends over for dinner? There are some measures that we've put in place to look at not just income, as I said, but what's the quality of life? So on those measures, there has been improvement.

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The report also focuses on the costs associated with poverty in Ontario. Our government has invested heavily and greatly in education. We're aware that children from low-income families tend not to do as well at school as their peers. They often fall behind, they drop out in greater numbers and face higher rates of poverty as adults. And so we've understood that and we have targeted resources where they are the most needed.

The cost of poverty in Ontario has been estimated as high as $13 billion a year when you take into account health care, criminal justice and lost productivity. So it only makes sense to make those investments up front, because you pay now or you pay later, and the whole thrust of our poverty reduction strategy is to make those investments so that those are costs avoided down the road.

Our goal of reducing child poverty by 25%: The Premier has said that there's no shortage of evidence that if we don't address these problems in the early years, the costs will only be greater later on. We clearly can't afford to ignore that nearly 1.7 million Ontarians live in poverty and that there is more to be done.

Nous devons agir maintenant pour aider les Ontariennes et les Ontariens les plus pauvres pour qu'ils puissent s'aider eux-mêmes, améliorer leur sort et contribuer à l'essor de leur collectivité.

So we want to act now. We have to help the most impoverished Ontarians so that they can help themselves build better lives and better their community, with support. We're going to all need to act together and continue to build on the common ground that we've established, and continue our efforts to lift 90,000 children out of poverty in this province by December 2013. That is our target.

One of the key milestones of the poverty reduction strategy was the release of the long-term affordable housing strategy, as I said, in November 2010. Our government recognizes the need for affordable housing and its role in supporting the growth and health of communities across Ontario, and that's why we developed the long-term affordable housing strategy, affectionately known as LTAHS. It is the first strategy of its kind in Ontario, Madam Speaker, and it sets a strong foundation in place for an accessible and efficient system for those who need safe and affordable housing. The proposed amendment to the rent increase guidelines that I've talked about this morning supports the goals of the long-term affordable housing strategy by giving families greater access to a range of affordable housing options.

Madam Speaker, yesterday on CBC—we're talking about housing, we're talking about what housing means and what it means in the broader context of society. Yesterday on CBC Radio Toronto in the morning, there was a story about the meaning of home, and it was the meaning of home as articulated by a grade 6 student from Woodbridge. Her story had been submitted to a nationwide writing contest, and I just want to share that story with you because I think it captures what we all, in our hearts, know home is. It was called The Meaning of Home.

"To me home is more than just brick, stone, mud, straw, snow, ice or wood. A home is a place where whether it's 5 a.m. or noon, if your mom shakes you awake or if it's at your leisure, you wake up. Safe and sound. A warm cozy bed or a pull-out couch. You shower, get dressed, eat and head off to whatever it is you call a regular day. School or work. After your day you can go home and relax and play. You have a nice meal and go to bed.

"A home is a place for love and joy. Some people still live in the house where they took their first steps and lost their first tooth. Sure, now that home is fairly old but it still has lots of sentimental value and that is worth more than any amount of money you can sell the house for so you can buy a new one.

"Home is a place where you build tree forts to isolate yourself from the outside world. You built snow men, igloo minis, threw snowballs at your unsuspecting neighbours and played spies with your best friends.

"Home is a place where you sneak into the candy cupboard and eat an entire bag of chocolate chips. You feed your vegetables to your dog or cat and give nine fish a whole can of fish food in one night. It's where your hamster escaped seven times so far and is starting to make hideouts in places like the oven that you don't use or the air ventilation system.

"Home is a place where you throw your birthday parties and have lots of good memories. Your family is always there to support you through thick and thin. They will always love you no matter how bad you have been.

"Home is a place where you keep your deepest secrets, wishes, and dreams. It's a sanctuary where you can feel safe and secure no matter what wars are going on outside. It's where you work out all the problems you encounter in your life. It could be a confusing math problem or a fallout with a friend.

"Today more than 100 million people are homeless. If we all work together and devote ourselves to making a difference, we can change that number. It isn't impossible for us to do. There are great people out there accomplishing great things. For example, Greg Mortenson wants to change the world, he wants to promote girls' education so that kids our age in Pakistan and Afghanistan have just as bright a future as we do. He is making the world a better place, little by little. Before he was famous, he was just like us, except he had a vision. If he can do it, so can we; making the world a better place begins at home. If you look deep down inside you will find a longing for a better world. It starts with you. When you do something good for someone, like giving them a home, the smile on their faces will be brighter than the sun. That smile will make you feel amazing. Why? It is

because you will have just helped improve a life once full of sorrow."

This is her final statement: "Giving a home is giving hope, happiness, love, and confidence. A home isn't something you should want. It is something you deserve."

Interjection: That's wonderful.

Interjection: Very nice.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes. You know, out of the mouths of babes. It's a grade 6 student.

Madam Speaker, every child in Ontario deserves a home, every grown-up in Ontario deserves a home. The long-term affordable housing strategy provides municipalities and housing providers with greater stability to deliver housing services, recognizing that communities have different needs. What we've asked of communities is that they measure those needs, that they look at the needs in their communities. As money flows to communities, they are able to then identify the needs quickly; they have projects that are ready to go. Those projects will not look the same from community to community, and so it's really important that we recognize that we've built that flexibility into the long-term affordable housing strategy because of the differences among communities.

L'avenir du secteur du logement dépend d'un financement pérenne. L'Ontario a besoin d'un engagement à long terme en matière de financement de la part du gouvernement fédéral qui soit équitable envers les Ontariennes et les Ontariens, et qui permette de satisfaire aux besoins des familles ontariennes.

We really need that long-term sustainable funding. We need a long-term funding commitment from the federal government that is not ad hoc, that is not unpredictable. We have had a good partner. Some of the members opposite grimace, but the fact is, we have had a good partner in the federal government, and I believe that we can continue that partnership. But we need a commitment, and we don't have that commitment past 2014.

The four-year federal-provincial Investment in Affordable Housing agreement that I signed on November 8, 2011, continues the goals set out in the long-term affordable housing strategy and the work that our government is doing to help address the housing needs in the province. Our investment in affordable housing in Ontario with the federal government—this latest investment, this latest agreement—will create over 5,000 new jobs and will build and repair approximately 7,000 affordable housing units over four years in Ontario. That's about the size of Hanover or Acton. These are big investments.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Barry's Bay.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's right. The program represents a combined investment of $481 million from the federal government and from the Ontario government.

We continue to build new affordable housing and repair existing units. Our overall investment of $2.5 billion since 2003 has translated into the construction and repair of more than 270,000 housing units and the provision of 35,000 rent supplements. All of that has created 57,000 jobs across the province.

The objective of the Investment in Affordable Housing for Ontario program is to improve living conditions for Ontarians across the province, and it's one step towards helping Ontario families open those doors to that prosperous future.

As I say, the fact is that we need that housing to be incremental, we need it to be predictable, and so I will be working with my counterparts across the country. In fact, I've already had one opportunity to talk with my counterparts across Canada, and we all recognize that that predictability and that partnership with the federal government is extremely important. So having a national housing strategy that includes the provincial partnership, I think, is critical.

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The current short-term or declining funding from the federal government limits the ability of municipalities and housing providers to make good on those long-term plans. We're asking municipalities to do long-term planning, but if they can't count on funding flowing, then that exercise starts to feel futile—and we know that the needs are changing.

Our demographics are changing. Almost every conversation that I have about housing now starts with bricks and mortar—or, as I say, frame and glass—but where it goes to is the demographics. It talks about: What are the supports that are needed? What's the range of housing that we're going to need to be able to deal with the demographics, the fact of aging baby boomers, the fact of a generation that is going to want to stay in home and is not going to necessarily want to go into long-term-care homes?

I think it was interesting that Don Drummond, the economist who advised us recently, said the answer is not to build long-term-care homes, but to provide that community care. We know that the Minister of Health is working very hard, and we're going to be working to provide the kind of supports—and that doesn't necessarily mean a nurse. It doesn't necessarily mean a doctor. It may mean a personal support worker. It may mean some housekeeping support to help people stay at home. But all of that has an impact on the kind of housing and the kind of interministerial and intersectorial discussion that needs to happen if we're going to come up with the right solutions.

We're going to continue to partner with municipalities and to engage other provinces and territories and the federal government in order to create a housing framework that includes adequate, long-term, flexible funding for affordable housing.

I firmly believe that the only rational way to build community infrastructure, whether it's roads, whether it's bridges, whether it's housing, is incrementally and predictably. Sometimes, we don't think about housing as infrastructure. Sometimes, when we talk about infrastructure, we talk solely about concrete infrastructure, and I don't think that is a good long-term vision. I think

what we need to do is we need to think about all of our community infrastructure, and housing is a big part of that.

Clearly, Madam Speaker, our government has stepped up to the pressing issue of ensuring affordable and safe housing in the province—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Did you say that with a straight face?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that my colleague the member for Parkdale–High Park is just waiting to get up and to shoot holes in all of the adequacy arguments that I have made. But I say to her that it would be refreshing if she were able to stand up and give credit where credit is due, because there have been billions and billions of dollars invested in housing.

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To my colleague the member for Renfrew, I have said that we have partnered with the federal government, that we have worked with the federal government and with municipalities to make these investments. But I have also said that that funding needs to continue. We have a commitment to 2014; beyond that, we do not know where the federal government stands. It's all very well to make ad hoc investments when the whim moves one, but the reality is—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I've never been moved by a whim.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You've never been moved by a whim. Well, I think that some of the ways that governments in the past have invested in infrastructure, including housing, have been on whims. They have been ad hoc. I think that what we have to accept—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Is that "whim" or "Wynne"?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That was "whim," W-H-I-M.

What we have to do, on all sides of this House, is we have to commit to predictable investment in infrastructure, including in housing, because if we don't do that, what happens is—and we saw it under the previous government—you have a gap in investment. You get out of the business of repairing and building roads, repairing and building bridges, building affordable housing, supporting the housing industry, and then what happens is you're playing catch-up, and that's what we've been doing since we came into office in 2003.

So when I say we have stepped up to the plate and we have made investments, I am under no illusion, nor is anyone under any illusion in this House, that the work is done. We know that it's an ongoing issue, we know that it has to be talked about across ministries and across governments and among our partners, and we need to do that, community by community, across the province. We need to establish what the need is.

What I am saying to all of the stakeholders and all of the community members who come and speak to me in my ministry—and when I went to ROMA/OGRA, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and Ontario Good Roads, I met with 50 delegations, and all of the delegations that spoke to me about housing—we talked about the different needs in the different communities, whether it was small rural communities or larger rural communities. We started with the concrete, bricks and mortar discussion, and we ended up with the supportive conversation. We've got a whole range of needs around the province, and those conversations have to continue.

As I've said, our proposed legislation, if passed, is a small piece of the initiative of providing affordable housing, but it is a piece of it. What we've said is that the rent increase guideline, if passed under this legislation, will be capped to 2.5% and it wouldn't fall below 1%. What I believe is that this represents a balanced amendment that will provide stability and predictability for renters and landlords. But we are not stopping there. The proposed amendment is just one step; it's just one part of the broader initiatives to keep housing affordable and to create more affordable housing opportunities.

We'll call upon the federal government, and we'll be working with them. I want stories like Julia's and David's, the couple from Brampton, to have a happy ending. Stories like those make us realize that having a place to call home is crucial. It's crucial to our well-being and our quality of life.

Avoir un chez-soi est le premier pas permettant aux familles à faible revenu et à leurs enfants de s'extirper de la pauvreté. Avoir un chez-soi est le premier pas qui permet à une personne de saisir les occasions qui s'offrent à elle pour améliorer son sort. Nous savons qu'il n'existe pas de solution unique, rapide ou simple au problème consistant à trouver une façon d'aider les gens à trouver un logement sûr, abordable et salubre.

I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that anyone who says to you, "If you would just do this one thing, then you would solve the housing problem in the province"—I think that the oversimplification of complex issues is one of the most serious challenges that confronts us as a society—not just government, but as a society. When you boil down solutions to sound bites, when you oversimplify complex issues—and I know, Madam Speaker, that after we present the budget today, which is a complex document—I think it's over 300 pages—what will happen is that in the aftermath of the presentation of that budget, there will be oversimplification after oversimplification. There will be a cherry-picking of items and there will be a critique of those in isolation from the rest of the budget.

What we have to recognize is that there are complex issues confronting us. We have a range of services that it is our responsibility as government to deliver. Affordable housing and the monitoring of affordable housing and the balancing of the affordable housing market is one of those responsibilities. There are a myriad of services that government provides—not only provides, but creates a framework within which other agencies can provide services—and so we need to make sure that our budget addresses all of those. If we allow ourselves to be trapped in the oversimplification, if we allow ourselves to take the bait on, "Well, if we just ran off in this direction, then we would solve the problem" or "If we run off in this

direction, we'll solve the problem"—the reality is that we have to have a considered and thoughtful approach, and I think, over the last few weeks, you have seen and you've heard that we've been doing that. We've been listening to people. We've been listening to stakeholders from across the provincial waterfront, if I might say. We've listened to the economist Don Drummond. We haven't subjected the province to slogans because it takes a lot more than slogans or sound bites or oversimplifications to solve the complex problems that we confront.

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It's not a simple question: How do we recover from an economic downturn that has laid low some of the strongest economies in the world? We look south of the border; we look at the struggle that the United States is facing.

So there are no simple solutions. It is not possible to boil the current economic situation down to a sound bite. It is also not possible to boil the housing issues down to a sound bite. If we look at the work that's being done in my ministry right now, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, we are looking at streamlining some of our homelessness programs. We are looking at implementing the long-term affordable housing strategy with municipalities, and we are looking at this legislation as part of the solution to making housing affordable for people across the province.

I think if we listen to that young child from Woodbridge, our grade 6 student who says that everyone deserves a home, that children deserve a home, it's not something that is a choice. It's something that is absolutely fundamental to having a secure life, not having that anxiety that comes with not knowing where you're going to live; for parents, not knowing how they're going to provide for their children. So if we can, as government, introduce just a little bit more certainty, if we can provide just a little bit more stability, then I think we are doing our job—and it's what's expected of us.

So I think that the proposed amendment is a step in the right direction, but I'm looking forward to continuing to talk to tenants, Madam Speaker, and to landlords about our proposed bill. I know there will be lots of discussion about the bill in the weeks and months ahead.

As I've said, I'd like to call on my colleagues across the floor to support this legislation. I think it's balanced. I think it allows—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Balanced? I knew you'd slip that in there.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You know, I had to, the member opposite; I had to. You were calling for me to say the word "balanced" again, and so I said it again just for you.

I believe that because it is, because it takes into account the needs of tenants and landlords, because it recognizes that there needs to be fairness, I hope that you will support it and we will provide that stability for tenants and landlords.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a couple of minutes of comments on the minister's address, and I have to say that I did enjoy some of the quotes that she made this morning. I'm sure we all have quotes.

Mr. Paul Miller: Lots of them.

Mr. Steve Clark: Lots of them, as the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek said, from landlords and tenants.

I have to tell you that I was extremely pleased when our leader, the leader of the official opposition, Tim Hudak, made me critic for municipal affairs and housing. As most of you know, I've had a bit of a history with the municipal side, but since I was appointed I've had a tremendous opportunity to engage with landlords and tenants right across the province, and I have thoroughly enjoyed hearing their feedback.

As the early days of this minority Parliament began, I think it gave us a great opportunity to look at substantial reform in the province of Ontario, and as I have—not just in my own riding, which is a small rural riding, but in urban ridings as well, there's just such an appetite for that bigger amount of reform in housing. And this bill could have went so much farther than the narrow cast that it provides today, because let's face it: It's only for one reason that this bill is being tabled, and it's because, as the minister noted, of this 3.1% increase. That's it; that's all. The reason the ceiling and the floor have changed to 2.5% and 1% is because of this year. So many people have talked to me about the fact that we should have more reforms, we should have more dialogue. If there's going to be a time that things are going to change in this province, they should change when we have a minority Parliament, where we can sit down and talk about the more substantive issues that are facing Ontarians. So no, I'm disappointed, Minister, plain and simple.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and I'd like to thank the member from Leeds–Grenville as well for their presentations and comments.

Unfortunately, this bill only makes a very small dent in the crisis in affordable housing in Niagara. I, like the member from Leeds–Grenville, have had a number of years' experience on the municipal front with Niagara Regional Housing in my area, and I know that the waitlists for affordable housing continue to grow. Although the minister talked about poverty rates decreasing, our information and stats show that poverty is actually increasing, at least in the adult population, across this province. There's much more that could have been done in this bill and that needs to be done in this bill with respect to affordability for tenants and the rights for tenants to live in safe, well-repaired housing in this province. The minister actually spoke about these happy stories, but I've heard many sad stories over the last number of months that I've been the critic for this area.

The minister also spoke about if, you know, people say, "Just do one thing"—well, we need to do just one

thing, and that is to actually provide housing in this province.

The issue of community care, I think, came up as well. If we're going to provide community care for seniors in their housing, then we need to quit cutting the hours that the CCAC is giving them so that we can actually keep seniors in their homes and not end up forcing them into nursing homes and onto those lists.

I look forward to my hour lead-in on this bill and I'll have much more to say on this—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Mr. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to add a little bit of time on the presentation by the Minister of Housing, Ms. Wynne, on this wonderful piece of legislation. I do hope, as the minister called for, that the House can move this piece of legislation forward, because it is much needed. It is well timed. It comes at a particular time when I think—and I do have a lot of tenants myself in my area. Sometimes we contest amongst ourselves who has got the most tenants, and I have to say that I have perhaps one of the largest and the poorest concentrations of tenants. I have to say that they will be welcoming this piece of legislation with open arms, as they have done with the rent control legislation that we have passed, and with the initial long-term strategy on housing as well.

I have to say, as the minister has mentioned during her presentation, I was part of the long-term housing strategy, and we travelled from Thunder Bay and Sudbury to Hamilton, to Peterborough. Frankly, Madam Speaker, we have heard the same thing. This comes at a time when we can give some peace of mind to our tenants, and, as the minister said before, every four years we can review this piece of legislation.

I think the 1% and the 2.5% will give our tenants peace of mind to adjust their lives, to move on with their lives, to concentrate on education, on family issues, on children, on getting on with important things in their lives, and not to worry about what they're going to be doing next month to pay possibly a very large increase in rent.

So I think it's well timed, it's an excellent piece of legislation, and I do hope that the House will support it and move on so we can provide protection for our tenants.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: A point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes, a point of order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise today to clarify some remarks I made in the House on Thursday, March 22, regarding the ministry being in caretaker mode during the writ period.

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My comments were intended to refer to the long-standing convention that ministries operate in caretaker mode during a writ period to ensure that substantive decisions are not made immediately prior to a possible change in government.

My intention, Speaker, was not to suggest that I was not the Minister of Health during that period, nor was it my intention to suggest that I was not responsible for overseeing Ontario's health care system. I was and remain responsible for—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd say it's not a point of order. Thank you very much.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I might just remind the member that normally a point of order is when you're correcting the record; it would be a significant number change or something very brief. This, then, becomes something beyond that. I listened carefully and it went on into much more detail than would normally be considered under a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: To that point of order, Madam Speaker: I could not hear because of the noise in the House. Did you indicate that it was a point of order?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to sit down. I made my ruling on this as not a point of order, but I did recognize her because the minister wanted to raise a point of order. Thank you.

We have one more speaker, and questions and comments. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I know we're speaking on Bill 19, not on points of order, apparently, this morning. I hope the Minister of Health will—she's more than welcome to make that statement today prior to question period, when the House is filled—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to restrict his comments to Bill 19.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Of course, of course, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much.

So, on Bill 19: I spent the whole hour here held in rapture by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and her wonderful address, but the bill—there's not much in the bill. She spoke for an hour and it sounded more like an application for reappointment to a job or something than a speech about a particular piece of legislation. It went on and on and on about what her purported wonderful record in government has been with respect to housing and rental properties and residential tenancies work and stuff like that, but it didn't really talk much about the bill; there's not much in the bill. That is, in fact, Madam Speaker, one of the concerns we have about this.

There are so many significant issues that need to and should be addressed within the Residential Tenancies Act, and the one that the government is doing is, it always seems—and it's so disappointing to members on this side of the House. Sometimes we actually show our frustration because we're powerless to stop them, but we do have to at least indicate our discontentment at times.

There are so many important things that could be talked about and should be talked about, and we would really appreciate if the government could move on in

those directions to help people who are in rental housing, and also to ensure that landlords are treated—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The minister has two minutes to respond.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the member for Leeds–Grenville. I hear his comments about the narrow scope of the bill, and I think I addressed that. I think I said that there are—I acknowledged that there are other issues that need to be talked about. I await the members of the opposition coming forward and raising those issues with me. I'm open to having that conversation. But at this point, we need to address this rent increase guideline, and we need to get on that because we need landlords to be able to plan for next year.

I thank the member for Welland for her comment. She noted that there are sad stories as well as happy stories. I totally get that. There are sad stories in the province, and there are as many sad stories as there are happy stories, but the reality is that we want to increase the happy stories. We want to do what we can to make sure that there are more happy stories.

She says that we can do just one thing. I don't buy that. I don't believe that there's just one thing that we have to do to solve the complex issues of affordable housing. I think there's a range of things that we have to do.

The member for York West, who is my parliamentary assistant: I want to thank him. I'm happy to give him the mantle of having the most tenants in his riding because he has a very challenging riding, and he's a terrific MPP. He represents the interests of his tenants and of his residents, and he knows housing. He has worked in the housing area as a parliamentarian for a number of years. We need to listen to his experience.

I apologize to the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, that he was held hostage in this place having to listen to me for an hour. But it could be worse. There were good anecdotes, and it's an important piece of legislation, no matter that you don't think it's balanced and you think that there's more that we should do. I appreciate you staying, I appreciate you listening, and I will even more appreciate you voting for the legislation.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being 10:15 of the clock, the House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my great pleasure to introduce in the west members' gallery the family of our Sarnia–Lambton page Kyle Hendrikx, who is actually the page captain today. I am proud to introduce Dale and Joanne Hendrikx, the parents; Anne Grootjen, Archie and Ada Hendrikx, grandparents; and Margaret Romphf, an aunt. Some of them also share the border with my colleague from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Monte McNaughton. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm extremely proud to introduce the parents of Alex Ruddy. They are Laura—and Laura, by the way, is an associate professor for Brock University—and Alex's dad, Doug, who is an emergency physician and a medical director for the southwest paramedic program. Welcome.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to introduce to the House today Ms. Rima Mastronardi. Rima's the mother of Domenique, our legislative page from Chatham–Kent–Essex. It's my pleasure to welcome her to a very exciting day at the Ontario Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no further introductions, it is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Peter Shurman: My questions today will all be to the Premier and all about spending and accountability. For example, back in June, I attended an event at the new Vaughan city hall, and the mayor of Vaughan and the member for Vaughan were there; the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care—she still is the Minister of Health, I think—they were all there.

Anyway, Premier, they were all there to reannounce—and that's right, I said "reannounce"—a new hospital for Vaughan. That was then, before the October election, and this is now, the time to deliver.

Premier, please tell the people of southern York region if you'll be keeping your commitment. Is the Vaughan hospital a yes or a no?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I welcome the question. I say to my honourable colleague that I know he has—and understandably so—a tremendous amount of impatience for the budget to be introduced shortly in this very chamber. We look forward to doing that.

I can tell you that we have worked hard to reconcile competing principles, and I think we've landed at a very good place, a place that gives expression to the choices that Ontarians would have us make, that would have us express their values. So we're going to do what we need to do to protect our schools, I say to my honourable colleague, and to protect our health care, including our hospitals. We will do more as well to lay a strong foundation for jobs and growth.

I think it will be exactly what the doctor ordered in terms of our economy and fiscal challenges.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Again to the Premier about his pattern of spending and unkept promises: It's just after 10:35 on March 27. Could you please tell us, at this particular moment, if your government is funding or not funding transit in Toronto? I ask this because six of your

Scarborough members don't seem to be able to decide which side of that question they're on. One week they're voting against subways, and the next, Ministers Duguid and Best are trying to backpedal to save their political hides.

So I again have to ask: Will you or will you not build subways for the residents of this city, especially those in Scarborough?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure whether my honourable colleague's leader is aware of this line of questioning, but this particular gentleman keeps asking me to spend more money. His leader asked us to spend less money.

We remain absolutely committed to investing in more transit in the city of Toronto. We're proud to be building, as we speak, a line between the airport and downtown Toronto. We're proud to be building a subway out to York University, and we look forward to coming to a final conclusion with our partners at the city of Toronto in terms of where we're going to proceed there. Recently, we received some real clarity with respect to their choice as a council. Our responsibility is to respect that choice, Speaker. We will do that. We look forward to investing in still more public transit right here in the great city of Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Back to the Premier about his inexplicable view of Ontario finances: Only for this government could being in the red be business as usual and $1.1 billion in annual revenue from racetrack slots be part of a subsidy. Had you put that revenue that you've netted from those slots, Premier, in your piggy bank every year and applied it to the deficit this year, that deficit could have been a modest $6 billion or $7 billion, but alas, you did not. Instead, you are going to turf that annual $1.1 billion. You're going to do something else, but you haven't said what.

Since your spending plan hasn't stopped, how do you plan to finance your expensive habits? How will you replace the $1.1 billion in annual revenue that you've decided to throw away?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: So, Speaker, if I can understand the pattern that has evolved in this line of questioning, it's kind of a new amalgam of criticism of spending but insisting within every question itself that we spend more. So you can understand why we're a little bit confused with respect to the position adopted by the folks on the other side.

Again, we will do what Ontarians want us to do. They want us to protect the gains that we've made together in our schools and in our health care. They want us to continue to find ways to build a still stronger economy that is characterized by strong growth and new jobs. They want us to do that in a way that is mindful of our responsibilities to our most vulnerable, and that's exactly what our budget will do.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Peter Shurman: Back to the Premier: I'm just trying to understand, Premier. You've blamed just about every imaginable thing for Ontario's financial disaster, but I bet you've never once looked in the mirror, conveniently forgetting the fact that all of Canada has been subjected to the same conditions. Yet it's Ontario, on your watch, that is suffering.

We had an election less than six months ago. You obviously knew, almost to the penny, what this year would hold for Ontario. So since you knew these things about Ontario's precarious financial position before, during and after the election, yet made spending promises that people believed in and voted for, the only conclusion one could reasonably reach is that you made promises you knew you couldn't keep. There's an unparliamentary word for that, Premier.

Based on your track record, how do you expect Ontarians to ever again believe that your pre-election promises could possibly result in delivery on your commitments?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, my honourable colleague is inclined to conveniently forget that he ran on our fiscal plan. He ran on our plan. The significance between us and them during the course of the election was that our platform was much more modest, both in terms of the number of commitments and the financial impact of our platform.

We have found a way, in fact, to deliver on our plan. We moved ahead with our 30%-off tuition grant, which I'm sure my honourable colleague is going to want to support. Our healthy homes renovation tax credit: We found a way to move forward with that as well. So, Speaker, we have found ways, in fact, to deliver on our commitments.

But again, I would remind my honourable colleague that he in fact ran on our fiscal plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: You know, Speaker, I think what we have here is a failure to communicate. We have a Premier and we have a government that seems to govern by weather vane. If the wind is calm but there's a southern breeze, then the wagons get circled, an abjectly incompetent minister is protected, and an economic development minister not fit to run a candy store can jump from surface LRT to buried subway overnight, joined in lockstep by a Minister of Consumer Services whom no one has ever heard from. Hospitals can be announced, reannounced and never built.

Premier, tell this House: When we go into the budget lock-up this morning, will we be pleasantly surprised and see you follow through on your election promises, or will we find a budget that looks like it was written by the former board of directors of Ornge?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, in all seriousness, I'm just not sure how that constitutes any kind of a positive, constructive contribution at the time of a very

important debate about where our province goes next. So it's an interesting litany, but more than anything else, it's a distraction. We'll stay focused on our responsibilities, Speaker.

What are Ontarians telling us today? I think they're telling us very clearly, "You've got to get the job done. There's a significant challenge before us: Make sure that you rise to the occasion"—and make sure we do hear what they are doing in their homes. They're making extraordinary efforts to pay down their debts and to protect those things that are most important to them and their families. We'll do the same thing here: We will protect their health care, we'll protect their schools, we'll protect their economy and we'll make sure we eliminate the deficit as part of a five-year plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Well, you haven't done much of a job so far. I'll take that as your gentlemanly way, Premier, of telling me where to go.

I'm an Ontarian, one of 13 million comprising the population of Canada's biggest, most beautiful province, and I, like my constituents, demand accountability and responsibility from the Premier and this government. Please stand in your place, Premier, and tell us this: Why should any Ontarian have confidence in your budget or your explanations of where we've been, how we got here and where you expect to take us when your finance minister shares with us his fifth attempt at a workable budget this afternoon? And while you're at it, why should any Ontarian accept a word he or you have to say and believe that you can actually lead us to a better day?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the question, and I say to my honourable colleague and to Ontarians in general: Take a look at our record—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We inherited a $5.6-billion deficit, Speaker. We in fact changed the law—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'll say it again: On three separate occasions now, we have placed our record before the Ontario electorate. We asked them to carefully consider our record. My friends opposite are unhappy that Ontarians arrived at a different conclusion than the one that they arrive at as a result of their partisan perspective.

We inherited a $5.6-billion deficit; we worked hard to clean that up. We then balanced our budget three times in a row. We were hit hard by a recession. Since then, Speaker, on every occasion we have come in under our projections when it comes to deficits. That's a substantive record on which we will continue to build.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, the Auditor General made it abundantly clear that the Minister of Health had ignored all the warning signs at Ornge, but the Premier still hasn't explained his role and his office's role in this debacle. Can the Premier tell this Legislature whether his top aide, Jamison Steeve, approved of Ornge's for-profit ventures after being informed in January 2011?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question, and I know that my honourable colleagues in the opposition generally have been very, very focused on a traditional political game. I understand that. But I would recommend to my colleague an article that appeared in today's Globe and Mail, written by a distinguished columnist, André—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland will withdraw.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Withdraw.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I quote: "To her credit, when the depth and breadth of the Ornge scandal became clear, Ms. Matthews did act, and pretty forcefully: The board was sacked, senior management was turfed and the OPP was called in....

"The calls for Ms. Matthews's resignation are little more than partisan squawking....

"Errors have been made. Fix them. Make sure they don't happen again.

"It's time for the minister to stand tall, not walk away."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Mr. Speaker, the Premier cites an article in today's Globe and Mail. Wouldn't it have been nice to have the same thoughts two years ago, when the scandal first erupted in this House? Why couldn't we know then?

On March 5, 2012, the Premier's health minister said this about the proposal to strike a select committee to investigate Ornge: "If it is the will of this Legislature that there be a select committee ... I will, of course, be fully supportive of that."

This Legislature made its will clear. There's an opportunity here, Premier, to save face and to do the right thing. Why won't the Premier strike the select committee today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think it's really important that we reach beyond this chamber. We're sometimes a little too focused on generating heat and a little less focused on generating light.

Let's take a look at what the Hamilton Spectator had to say, Speaker, just yesterday: "At a time of budget pressure and enormous change in the health care sector, is it in the best interests of Ontarians for" Minister "Matthews to resign? No. It is better that she be permitted to continue the cleanup of Ornge."

Again, I recommend to my honourable colleague that he take a look outside this chamber, where, as I say, we can be too devoted to heat, a little less devoted to light, to get a good understanding of what Ontarians expect of us.

They expect us to clean up what's happening at Ornge and they expect us to move forward, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The heat that I think the Premier refers to is the heat that his Minister of Health is taking off of his back and his responsibility to deal with the behaviour at Ornge and the scandal at Ornge. It's disturbing to see the Premier and his government go back on their word, on the word of the health minister, and I think families are rightly wondering why this government refuses to strike a select committee. Is it because the Auditor General suggested there's more to the Ornge debacle than we know and the Premier knows as well?

Please, Premier, strike the select committee today and do the right thing for the people of Ontario.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: On the matter of a committee, I think my honourable colleague will recognize that we have, by way of concrete efforts, taken a number of steps to ensure that there are considerable reviews of what happened. First of all, there was a forensic audit. Then there is the matter of the ongoing Ontario Provincial Police investigation. There is the matter of the auditor's report. There's the matter of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which is holding hearings and calling witnesses. There is the matter of new legislation introduced in this very chamber, Speaker. There will be an opportunity, hopefully, upon second reading hearings, for a committee to preside and have witnesses appear at that time—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: And then, of course, there's the matter of a new performance agreement that we've introduced. I think all that speaks again to what the public would have us do.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. All across the north, municipal councils are up in arms over the elimination of the Ontario Northland because they know it will mean the eventual total loss of passenger services in many communities across the north. North Bay city council unanimously adopted a motion calling on this Premier to honour his pledge not to allow the privatization of ONTC, and they are seeking the immediate suspension of the divestment process so that a community task force can devise a plan that works for the north.

Premier, will you listen to the people of the north and announce you're abandoning your misguided plan to close down Ontario Northland?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the question coming from my honourable colleague, and I must say this was a very difficult decision. Our record of support for the ONTC, back to 2003, was to provide 439 million more dollars. We have made a determined effort to try to find a way to make the ONTC in its existing construct viable, and it is not, Speaker. We're now providing a subsidy of some $400 per trip. Obviously, that is simply not sustainable, Speaker. Subsidy levels have increased some 274%, from $27.6 million in 2003 to $103 million in 2011. Revenue has declined and ridership has remained stagnant.

So, Speaker, it's not something that we come to with enthusiasm, but it's something that we come to out of a sense of responsibility.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Ontario Northland is the lifeline that transports people and freight and employs nearly 1,000 people across the north; it's the lifeline. So let's say we're cancelling—Metrolinx is also a service that doesn't make you money. No wonder northern municipalities are outraged.

But don't take my word for it. Here are the exact words of Al Spacek, president of the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities: "You cannot imagine my shock and disappointment. It's not just the horrible ramifications this divestiture has for the people of northern Ontario, it was also the way this decision was arrived at—in Toronto behind closed doors without any input from northerners who are most impacted."

Why is the Premier making closed-door decisions that will eventually deny access to public transportation to northern families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, again I want to reiterate that this was not an easy decision for us to make. We understand it is not going to be easy for some of our northern communities and families in particular, Speaker, to cope, but we feel, again, out of a sense of responsibility, it's a decision that we must make.

Speaker, we want to ensure that the limited resources that we have are available for services that matter most to northerners. We want to continue to invest in our northern schools. We want to continue to invest in our northern health care system. We want to continue to invest in job creation and priorities like the NOHFC and the northern highway program.

It comes down to this being a matter of choices, Speaker, and we decided to invest in those programs that benefit all northerners: their schools, their health care, their highways, and their job development programs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. John Vanthof: City politicians, union officials and northern chambers of commerce are all calling on this Premier to give the north the chance to prove that the ONTC can be a viable operation. Many of us feel the plan was to cancel the ONTC all along—another broken promise. Why else was a lucrative refurbishment contract given to a Quebec firm last year when the work could have been done in North Bay?

But, Premier, the most important question in this whole series is, what have you got to say to Fran Cote when she can no longer take the train to Toronto for her

cancer treatments? And not a later train, not an earlier train—there's one train, and you're killing it, sir.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I believe my honourable colleague in fact understands that we'll be working through the divestment process to ensure that there is a replacement. I also want to assure my colleagues that while the ONTC operations will be tendered for sale, we will maintain the Polar Bear Express and motorcoach services—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: —to communities served only by the ONTC.

Speaker, again, I know this is a difficult decision, but there is some surprising support in some surprising quarters. For example, I'm very pleased to have the support of the member for Nipissing, whose community is directly affected by this. This is something we could not do without support from some members of the opposition, and I want to acknowledge the continuing strong support of the member for Nipissing for this difficult initiative.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Picard and the Hamilton Spectator may be interested in some more information about Ornge.

Following my questions in the Legislature on April 5, 13 and 25, in which I warned the minister about Ornge, I received this letter. It's a 15-page letter from Ornge threatening me with legal action. It was written by a Mr. Lepine. He refers to my questions as an attack, a partisan attack. He concludes by saying, Speaker, "We are consulting counsel."

This letter, I was advised, was actually written by the president of the Liberal Party, and when the Premier characterizes opposition questions about Ornge, he refers to it similarly, with the same words, as "partisan attacks." Is it possible that the Premier's speaking notes for this issue are written by the same president of the Liberal Party?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, this is a lot of reaching, a lot of grasping, I would suggest here, Speaker.

What I can say to my honourable colleague is that while I appreciate his persistence and enthusiasm, I interpret our responsibility and our accountability owed to the people of Ontario as being somewhat different. I believe that our responsibility now is to find a way forward.

I commend the minister for acting in a concrete and substantive way in the face of the information as it was received by her. She brought in a team of forensic accountants. There's an OPP investigation under way. We've received the auditor's report. We've introduced new legislation. We've replaced the CEO; we replaced the board. There's a new performance agreement, and now we're moving forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, Alfred Apps is all over this. Alfred Apps's words are all over every letter that was sent.

The auditor said that when he saw what was going on at Ornge, his nose told him that something was wrong. There were many noses, including the minister's, the Premier's and the Premier's advisers, who saw the same information. Why did they not respond in the same way that the Auditor General did? Why is the Premier covering for those people?

We want to know this: Why—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Interjection: Withdraw.

Mr. Frank Klees: We want to know this: Why will the minister not subject herself to a select committee? Why will the Premier not subject his aides and others in the government to a select committee so that we can get to the bottom of it, find out who was responsible for what, why they made the decisions they did—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will be seated when I stand. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I say to my honourable colleague, he's well aware the matter is going to public accounts, I think as soon as tomorrow. Speaker, there will be ample opportunity during those public accounts committee hearings to call witnesses and to put questions to them.

I must say, Speaker, there is a growing interest in members of the opposition who have had access to information and who hung on to that information, did not bring that to our attention, did not see any cause for concern in that information at the time, who are now saying, of course, there was much cause for concern.

Let's move ahead with the public accounts committee. Let's take a look at all those individuals who had access to the information and why it is that they didn't bring it to the forefront.

FOREST FIREFIGHTING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Minister of Natural Resources: Minister, last year the northwest was devastated by one of the worst fire seasons on record. Many First Nation communities in the Far North were evacuated, and crews had difficulty keeping up.

This year, we have had one of the driest and warmest winters on record. While they have been small in size, a number of fires have already been reported, during a period when temperatures are normally well below zero.

My question is simple: Does the minister have a plan in place for what could be one of the worst fire seasons in our province's history?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question. Indeed, last year was a rather extraordinarily difficult forest fire season, almost a record in the northwest. We were very, very proud of the work that was done by our Ministry of Natural Resources staff. Premier McGuinty, in fact, was up in the northwest at the most crucial period of time. We're grateful for all the work that was done.

May I say, you're right. We're very conscious of the challenges that may be faced as a result of the kind of winter that we've had—the lack of snow, the lack of rain, even in the warmer temperatures happening. May I assure you that, indeed, our ministry people are not only on the alert; they're in position to fight the battles as they need to be fought. We're committed to certainly having the resources that we need. This could not be more important.

May I say also, we learned some good lessons from last year as well, in terms of how we can work with the municipalities and the First Nations communities, indeed, at a very, very difficult time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Speaker, my point is this. Last year, we had help. Fire crews from a number of provinces stepped in to help. With warm and dry weather affecting most of Canada, we can't count on this help this year.

Later today, our provincial budget will be unveiled, and many are projecting across-the-board cuts. Will the minister give his assurances that this department will have the financial resources in place to effectively protect northerners and our vital infrastructure?

1100

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Well, thanks again, and that's certainly a fair question. Let me assure you that indeed our top staff, in terms of our forest fire management centre, is working ahead of time to make sure that they are ready. We will have aircraft and other obviously important devices in place.

We have agreements, as you would know also, with other jurisdictions in terms of help, if it is needed. We were very grateful for the assistance last year, as we share that with other jurisdictions when our forest fire season is not as bad as last year's was.

So again, let me provide you with the assurance that I think you're looking for, that indeed our ministry is prepared, is recognizing that this may be a more challenging season.

I personally am looking forward to getting up to the Dryden fire management centre very, very soon to meet with them. We will be prepared; we will have the resources in place; we will have the aircraft and all the equipment we need to make sure that the forest fire season—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, the warm weather of the past several weeks has caused earlier-than-normal breakup of ice in northern Ontario. Over the weekend, the chiefs and councils of Kashechewan and Fort Albany First Nations declared a state of emergency when the early spring melt caused the Albany River to break up, raising concerns of potential flooding and creating an immediate threat to the communities in the area.

Despite the fact that weather conditions posed a real challenge for pilots on the ground, I understand your ministry staff, working closely with Emergency Management Ontario and other partners, proceeded with the planned evacuation of the communities' most vulnerable residents, including elderly people and children.

Minister, can you please share with the members of this House details of the weekend's events?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thanks to the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan for asking this very important question.

Certainly, Speaker, at a time when Ontarians needed our government the most, Ministry of Natural Resources staff moved quickly and decisively to address the extraordinary flooding challenges in the communities of Kashechewan and Fort Albany this past weekend. Despite quite harsh weather conditions, Ministry of Natural Resources aircraft flights conducted surveillance to monitor the fast-changing flood situation. Six aircraft completed 10 flights to assist with the evacuation, to ensure the safety of over 250 of the communities' most vulnerable.

Speaker, this was a very difficult situation, yet emergency workers on the ground were very much at their best. I sure want to acknowledge the extraordinary efforts and bravery of each and every man and woman involved in this weekend's flooding situation. I especially want to thank Emergency Management Ontario; our federal, municipal and First Nations partners who were integral in ensuring the swift and smooth implementation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Minister, again, thank you to your ministry, the EMO and our federal and First Nation partners on this file.

I'm told MNR and officials in Kashechewan have reported that there is concern along the north channel if breakup occurs, and it could affect the water intake for the community. The water level is going down in both channels and escaping on the south side. There's a reported problem 10 kilometres upriver as a result of freezing last night. It has also been reported that lots of water is still upstream and it will take days, if not a week, for it to run through.

When these natural precarious circumstances cause inhabitable conditions, it's always necessary to ensure

that those most vulnerable are the priority and are taken somewhere until conditions improve.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can you tell me, what is the status of the evacuation and what arrangements have we made for accommodating the evacuees?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say thank you to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan for asking this very important question.

The temperatures in the area are expected to remain steady and cold, which has helped stabilize the current ice breakup. As my colleague has pointed out, currently 258 vulnerable residents, including elderly, women, children and people with medical conditions, were airlifted from Kashechewan to Kapuskasing and Wawa over the weekend.

The First Nations leadership in Kashechewan and Fort Albany First Nations have suspended evacuations until further notice. The two First Nations and the Ministry of Natural Resources are assessing river conditions to determine whether further evacuations would be needed.

In closing, I want to say thank you to all the people involved and thank you to Kapuskasing and Wawa—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, we're less than a week away from your College of Trades making critical decisions on apprenticeship ratios and mandatory certification that will directly impact jobs here in Ontario and the ability for Ontario citizens to have a career in the trades. It is clear that your process has been completely secretive. Minister, can you explain why you are keeping thousands of employers in the dark and not providing details on your plan that will kill thousands of jobs here in Ontario?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I think the member opposite must have some political dyslexia. The only government that held back apprenticeships in the modern history of Ontario was his party, in power, which was generating a total of 60,000 people in the apprenticeships and trades, compared to 120,000 today.

I'm tempted to ask the member opposite, given their appalling record in government and their failure, when they will apologize to the people of Ontario for holding back Ontario for about 20 years in a broken system that didn't work, where it was big government telling business and labour how to run businesses and how to do training.

Mr. Speaker, we not only have 120,000 people in our trades and apprenticeships—and I want to congratulate those hard-working students—we have 30,000 people right now adding every year.

Right now, I would invite every member of the Conservative—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Stop the clock, please. Because of some of the heckling, I wasn't quite sure of what I heard, but I think I did hear something that I did not find appropriate in this House, so I'll ask the member to withdraw.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I withdraw, whatever it was.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will not hear other comments while I'm speaking.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham.

Supplementary question?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you for that answer, Minister. You're the gift that just keeps on giving.

Minister, I've heard from stakeholders representing thousands of concerned employers and employees that would like to have an opportunity to present their cases to the College of Trades. It's fairly simple. You know full well that the governance of your college is biased and completely unbalanced.

Minister, you say that the College of Trades is open, transparent and accountable. Then, why do you continue to keep these hard-working Ontarians in the dark and not provide the details, process or criteria on how they can have a say on the future of their jobs?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I take that as high praise from the member opposite—I am the gift that keeps on giving; as a matter of fact, what I'm giving are invitations.

You'll remember, Mr. Speaker, I invited every member opposite to join us for a reception with the College of Trades where business leaders, board members, their former colleague Mr. Ron Johnson—a former Conservative member—to come and join us to learn about that. These people volunteered several hours of their time to answer all the questions very transparently; not one member of the party opposite showed up.

Since I would like to keep on giving, let me send another invitation to the members opposite. Today at the Ex, there are 7,000 young people, the businesses and trades, for building our future. You will meet 8,000 young people going into apprenticeships and every business leader—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, the McGuinty government promised to review the funding formula in 2010 and didn't do so. Now, school boards are facing painful, painful cuts. The Toronto District School Board is facing large-scale layoffs, and schools are facing closure across Ontario.

Minister, why did your government break its promise to review the funding formula?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to stand up and talk about education as the

best investment in Ontario's future prosperity, and to have that conversation on budget day I think is entirely appropriate.

Ontario Liberals are committed to helping our kids become lifelong learners. That's why we've increased funding for education for the ninth straight year. Funding is up 46% since 2003. Our full-day kindergarten program, Speaker, is the first of its kind in North America, and by 2014, 250,000 children will be enrolled in full-day kindergarten. Families will save thousands of dollars of child care costs while their kids get a world-class education, and we know it's world-class because we are being acknowledged around the world.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, it's really hard to be angry at the minister for evading the question. The simple reality—the simple reality, Speaker—is that in Peterborough, PCVS is facing closure. Communities in Nickel Belt, in Sudbury, in Huron–Bruce, all facing school closures; here in Toronto, disruption of our schools with layoffs. Minister, what do you say to all those who are suffering from the cuts you've imposed on school boards?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I know the member opposite knows very well that the funding formula has changed every year. The members opposite, on that side of the House, Speaker, voted against every new dollar that we have sought to invest in education.

Let's talk about the Toronto District School Board for a minute. We've continued to increase funding to the TDSB by 33% over the past eight years, even though enrolment has declined by 12%.

I am so proud of the record that our government has when it comes to education, Speaker. We're being acknowledged around the world as one of the jurisdictions where students, no matter their first language, no matter where their families have come from, are achieving success in Ontario's education system. We look forward to doing much more, and I would ask the members opposite to support us in the Accepting Schools Act and other pieces of legislation before this House that are doing just that.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question today is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, Ontario is on track to replacing dirty coal-fired generation with a cleaner source of power by 2014. This is the single biggest climate change initiative in North America and has made Ontario a global leader in clean energy, so that's something my constituents take a lot of pride in.

A lot of the clean energy focus has been on wind and solar power; however, one of the cleanest and most affordable forms of energy is hydroelectric power. For many years, hydroelectric power has been a key component of Ontario's electricity supply mix. In my riding of Peterborough, the Trent-Severn water system offers many hydroelectric opportunities. Minister, can you please share with this House what Ontario's hydroelectric supply will be, now and into the future?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I share the member from Peterborough's support and enthusiasm for the clean source of power that's hydroelectric. It has powered Ontario homes and businesses for generations, and we're determined that it's not only going to be a source of power today but a continuing source of power in the future. We've already brought on new projects over the past five years, and we're in construction right now on a couple of other exciting ones that I'll talk about in a moment.

My friend from Peterborough mentions even more opportunities that are available throughout the province of Ontario. We don't have the benefit of vertical geography for most of Ontario, so we look forward to the force of water, to run-of-the-river opportunities and to enhancing the vertical geography we have. Hydroelectric power: We're determined to be a province of clean, green sources of power. Hydroelectric power is the most important—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Thank you, Minister, for that excellent response. I am pleased to hear that hydroelectric power will continue to play an important role in Ontario's electricity supply mix.

Many clean energy projects across the province are creating jobs and bringing needed investment to Ontario communities. To date, Ontario's clean energy economy has created over 20,000 new jobs and brought over $27 billion of private sector investment at a time when our economy needs it most. Minister, I'd like to know what hydroelectric projects are currently being developed in this province and what their economic benefits are for all the people of Ontario.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: He brings up a very important point: What are we doing to build on that great history? I want to talk about two.

One is Niagara Falls. It's the largest hard-rock tunnel in the world, and it's going to bring water from above the falls down to the hydroelectric generating station at Beck and power another 160,000 homes every year for 100 years. It alone is providing $1 billion worth of construction and related materials investment into Ontario and into the Niagara region.

Another one is the Lower Mattagami, just south of James Bay. I know the members opposite who talk about jobs will want to hear about this, because it's a 440-megawatt hydroelectric project, fully involving Chief Hardisty of the Moose Cree First Nation. It's going to power hundreds of thousands of homes, $2.6 billion worth of job-creating economic—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. We've heard the government often repeat that Pan Am is on time and on budget. They figured that was enough, but actions speak louder than words. The minister and Pan Am organizers are backpedalling. Apparently, now they're only trying to be on time and on budget.

The hard-working families of Ontario deserve better. They have the right to know how their money is being spent. When will the minister finally stop hiding behind the same cloaks of secrecy that shield the College of Trades and the Ornge scandals and instead do the right thing? Release the timeline and the budget to the families who are footing the $1.4-billion bill.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, once again, it's a pleasure to remind the member opposite and my other critic—who I've invited to come and meet with me to discuss the issues regarding the Pan Am.

As I have said very openly and very transparently, we are investing $1.4 billion, of which the province is putting up $500 million. Of that amount of money, there have been a number of venues that have been announced. Infrastructure Ontario has been monitoring and managing the process, around 80% of which has been complete. We've got a little bit more to do. Once it's done, and working in collaboration with the federal government, we'll announce and open up the vision.

I am anxious to tell you everything I can, but at this point, we do have a number of items that are still missing from completion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Speaker, we've heard this recycled script before. Here are the facts: The only budget we've seen is three years old and obsolete. No audited financial statements have been released. FOI requests for the budget have been denied and 60% of the venues have been changed. None of this adds up to respect for the earnings of hard-working Ontario families. This pattern of secrecy endemic to Pan Am organizing rivals that of Ornge and the College of Trades.

Since I know the minister will continue to skirt producing the plan and budget, can the minister at least give us his word that they're on track and confirm that their slogan, "On time and on budget," is not merely rhetoric?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this: In over 80 years, this province has not had the opportunity to host the games. It was because of the vision and the leadership of this government that we were able to acquire and win the bid.

In all the years that the Conservatives were in power, not once did they build an infrastructure to support our athletes, an infrastructure that will support our economy, that's going to create 15,000 new jobs and enable us to provide social well-being for our children, and health promotion. These are critical to our economy, critical to society.

Working together—and I encourage the member to continue to contact me, as he already has—I will continue—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order

Hon. Charles Sousa: —on these issues.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the work being done by Toronto 2015, in collaboration with all levels of government, to produce outstanding games in 2015.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^me^ France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Speaker, the medical director of the emergency department, Dr. Rob Lepage, publicly sounded the alarm bells over the growing crisis at our hospital in Sudbury. He wrote to the minister. He told her about the overcrowding in our emergency department. He told her about the long wait times for sick people—some of the worst wait times in the province. He told her about good, qualified, experienced nurses and physicians leaving our emergency department because the conditions are so bad.

Why is this? Well, in part because the hospital has been told to close 30 beds in order to balance their budget. They have to do this, although they're still caring for over 112 ALC patients.

Does the minister have any intention to answer the alarm bells that are ringing in Sudbury right now in their emergency department?

1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I was very pleased to be in Sudbury. I visited Health Sciences North, and I saw some of the superb work that is happening at Health Sciences North.

I do understand that there are challenges. I think there are challenges in all of our hospitals, but what I can tell you is that they are all making progress towards the goal of providing excellent care for all Ontarians: providing the right care at the right time, at the right place and for the right price.

I'm very pleased to know that at Sudbury Regional Hospital we've seen wait times go down dramatically. For hip replacements, for example, it's gone down by 273 days. Knee replacements have gone down 786 days. That's an 80% reduction in knee replacement surgery.

There's excellent work being done and it will continue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^me^ France Gélinas: When the medical director of our emergency department recommends that we call a code orange—an internal disaster—I call this a crisis. When patients describe their experience in our emergency department as similar to a refugee camp or a war zone, I call this a crisis. When health care professionals say that patient safety is being compromised, that they are not able to do their jobs because of the situation in the

ED department, I call this a crisis. When 33 of our 38 emergency room beds are not available for emergency care, I call this a crisis. How much worse does it have to be before the minister reacts?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, I was in Sudbury and visited Health Sciences North. I visited programs that are specifically designed to support seniors who are in hospital to get healthy and to go back home as quickly as they can and as safely as they can. I know that the people at Health Sciences North are very focused on reducing their ALC level by providing more supports in the community.

I was also delighted to visit Finlandia, a wonderful example for the whole province of how to care for seniors in the community through supportive housing.

There's a lot of good happening in Sudbury, and I know that the good people at Health Sciences North are focused on fixing this problem.

EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: My question today is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario has a highly skilled and highly educated workforce because of the importance our government has given to post-secondary education and skilled trades. In uncertain times, we need to protect our government's investments in these key areas that have put Ontario's education system at the forefront.

A few weeks ago, I was impressed to hear the minister speak about incubators in our universities and colleges. These are important in helping people start their own businesses and also in helping them get ready to participate in the economy.

Speaker, through you to the minister: How is our government providing the support required for our students to have an opportunity to participate in experiential learning programs?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: First of all, there are a lot of ways that members can do that, and I want to thank the member for having attended the many events: the College of Trades and others. I also want to commend some of my colleagues in the opposition: the member for Essex and the member for London–Fanshawe, who have both been very active out there, meeting with groups and working with members on this side to advance this.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to put out a challenge, if I may. Today, the Ontario Construction Secretariat, at the Ex, has 7,000 young people down there with major business leaders and companies as well as every training institute for the apprenticeship. Every member in this House, including every member opposite, has received an invitation when your students from your community are looking at that.

I will conclude by saying that the party opposite has made a great deal about trades. One way each member can do that is to show up at this event in the next three days and be there for your students, who—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, Minister. I certainly am proud to attend many of those events and to know what's happening in my community and across the province with respect to training and employment opportunities.

The Premier said yesterday that health care, education and social services are high priorities for Ontarians and will continue to be our priorities. It is very clear that our government's investments in our post-secondary education are an important aspect of ensuring that we continue to create a strong economy.

The work-related knowledge, skills and experience gained from participating in experiential learning programs have a positive impact on the student life and career prospects, giving them a competitive edge in today's labour market. Minister, how will you ensure that employers continue to participate in providing an opportunity for working and learning beyond our post-secondary institutions?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Not only do we have 120,000 people in apprenticeships and trades—another 30,000 every year—we have 50,000 co-op students right now in universities like Waterloo who are working. We have the Digital Media Zone. There was a group here, that some of you saw, from Saudi Arabia, who are touring that.

We want to continue connecting private capital to young students so that they're graduating not only with their trade certificates but with their own businesses, their incorporation certificates.

But before I sit down, I do want to go back, because I'm going to ask the folks to keep attendance. I will give a personal tour to the member from Simcoe North and the member from Cambridge, if they would join me down there, because I think it's important that—there are some times when you have to be Ontarians first before partisan politics. We can all, simply by being present, show up and support those young people in making some positive employment choices.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member from Cambridge.

TUITION

Mr. Rob Leone: I hope the minister won't stand me up. Mr. Speaker, this question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities—a busy man today, Minister. The Ontario tuition grant has been flawed since day one. It has been condemned by part-time students, it has been condemned by individuals returning to school after being laid off, and it has been condemned by single parents returning to school after caring for their kids. A month ago, Mr. Speaker, it was condemned by the Liberal economist Don Drummond.

The minister has protected this program as one of his pet projects. There has to be a reason for this. One hopes that it is to address the jobs crisis. Given that the deadline is fast approaching to apply for this program, can the

minister tell this House how many single moms, laid-off workers, mature students and graduate students are receiving this grant?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, come to order, please. The member from Renfrew: last time. As for the others, I'd like to hear the answer. We're having a little trouble with the speakers today—not you as speakers, but the actual Speaker's speakers—and I'm having a little difficulty hearing, so I'd appreciate your indulgence. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks. Mr. Speaker, I think students in Ontario are still waiting for an apology from the party opposite for raising their tuition 67% and taking half a billion out of the higher education system.

But we have to have hope, because the member from Cambridge signed a petition for a tuition freeze the other day, and I'm waiting to see that reconciled into the government spending plan opposite—the tax-and-spend Tories are at it again.

We have 310,000 of 600,000 students who are eligible—the vast majority have already signed up—for the 30%-off-tuition grant. Of 600,000 undergraduate students, we have 475,000 who receive some form of student aid, including 52,000 older workers who are back in retraining—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I haven't seen so much frivolous sidestepping since the government House leader failed to answer questions on Ornge yesterday.

The reality is, the Ontario tuition grant is flawed. Student groups have suggested that only one third of college and university students are eligible for this grant, and few are actually receiving it. This policy is so flawed that students had to opt into the program, and when so few students were doing so, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities engaged in a travelling road show to fix the bad PR surrounding the implementation of this flawed policy.

All these costs are not accounted for in the $2-billion price tag. Ontario is heading down a path toward a $30-billion deficit. Minister, will you at least answer this question directly: How much was spent on this uncosted, unbudgeted and unaccounted-for tour?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It was a little bit more than zero.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark, come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, as I've said many times, I'm not sure whether Saturday Night Live is more fun or the opposition, these days, when it comes to ridiculousness.

The money was found within, and you'll see it in the budget. This government made the commitment. I was asked by our Premier to deliver it within budget—and as my friend the minister said, on budget, on time.

To answer his question very directly, Mr. Speaker—and I'll say it slowly, because I've answered it several times—of 600,000 students, 475,000 received some form of student aid, including for older workers. Fifty-two thousand laid-off workers whose families get as much as $28,000—that's some of the finest—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

POVERTY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Certainly the social planning council of Ontario has shown that since the Liberals took power, poverty rates are up, both for adults and children. The McGuinty government, in light of that, promised with great fanfare to reduce child poverty by 25% by 2013. A key policy commitment to achieving this was to increase the Ontario child benefit to $1,300 by 2013.

Now that the government is abandoning its promise to increase the child benefit and freezing social assistance rates, is it official, I ask the minister, that the government has completely abandoned its poverty reduction program and plans on actually balancing its budget on the backs of Ontario's poor and children?

Hon. John Milloy: The Premier indicated Sunday and yesterday in various media appearances that we've had to make some very tough choices in this budget. But what he has also indicated yesterday is that despite the fiscal constraints we have, we are still going to find resources for investments in three key areas: education, health care and social services.

Mr. Speaker, we will not, like the Conservative government when it was in power, balance the budget through a 22% cut in social assistance rates.

The Premier's commitment to social services builds on the good work we've done in terms of the Ontario child benefit, which will continue to go up; in terms of the increase in social assistance rates; in terms of the supports for those people who want to transition into employment, including changing the rules, providing more benefits and allowing the extension of drug, dental and vision benefits.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we are undertaking the most comprehensive review of social assistance in generations.

VISITORS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order for the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Would it be a point of order, Speaker, if I were to welcome Brock, Ceci and Michael Cairns to the Legislature today?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, it would not, but we do welcome them.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 4 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1133 to 1600.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2012 ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO DE 2012

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I move, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the indulgence of the entire House and remind them to make sure that the aisles are clear, that the pages deliver the budget to each member.

I'm impressed. I have to check to see that all members have received their copies of the budget?

The budgets have been received. It's now time for the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I rise to present Ontario's 2012 budget.

It lays out a five-year plan to keep Ontario on track to balance the budget by 2017-18 ... and describes the choices that we are making.

Choices that speak to the priorities of Ontarians.

The right choices.

Ontarians want a strong and growing economy that creates well-paid jobs.

People want a strong education system for their children because they recognize that it is the best possible investment we can make in their future.

In fact, a strong education system keeps us competitive in a tough global economy.

People want a strong health care system because we know that when someone we love is sick, nothing else matters.

A strong health care system also gives us an economic advantage.

Protecting and building on Ontario's achievements, while returning to balance in 2017–18, are the cornerstones of the 2012 budget.

To achieve these goals, we will transform the public and broader public sectors and, in so doing, how they serve all Ontarians.

Government, and the role of government, are evolving ... and everything we continue to do must be done more efficiently and even more effectively.

All of us in this Legislature, and all Ontarians, must turn our attention first to balancing the budget.

We must change the political culture and the way all of us in this Legislature, and across the province, approach and confront the challenges that we face.

To meet these goals, Ontarians needs a plan ... a plan that makes the right choices to build confidence in our economy both at home and abroad ... a plan to continue to move our province and our people forward, together ... a plan to build a stronger Ontario for our children and our grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, economic growth has returned to Ontario.

It is slower growth, yet growth nonetheless.

Our gross domestic product rose by an estimated 1.8% in 2011 and all private sector forecasters expect modest growth to continue.

To be prudent, our plans are based on forecasts that are slightly lower than those of private sector consensus.

We are projecting GDP growth of 1.7% in 2012 and 2.2% in 2013.

Mr. Speaker, there is growth in jobs.

Ontario has created over 500,000 net new jobs since 2003 ... and almost 300,000 net new jobs since the recessionary low in June 2009.

On a net basis, these are all full-time jobs—and there is still more to do.

In fact, the choices we are presenting in this year's budget will create and protect 170,000 jobs.

En fait, les choix que nous proposons aujourd'hui permettront de créer et de protéger 170 000 emplois.

To ensure strong job growth into the future, Ontario must eliminate the deficit to strengthen the foundation of our economy.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of the global recession ... as a result of the substantial stimulus the McGuinty government, like others around the world, injected into the economy to create and preserve jobs ... as a result of the external factors that are affecting our economic potential—such as ongoing global economic uncertainty, a sluggish US economy, a higher Canadian dollar and rising oil prices ... Ontario has a deficit ... and despite progress towards balancing the budget, we must make the right choices to ensure that we continue making gains in overcoming the challenges as well.

If Ontario does not take strong action, the deficit will grow ... and that would mean an unsustainable level of debt.

Already today, interest on the debt is the third-largest expense in the budget.

More than we spend on colleges and universities.

This cannot continue, Mr. Speaker.

We have seen countries around the world lose control of their finances to others ... and lose control over their ability to decide where to invest in public services.

That is why we choose, building on earlier initiatives, to take strong action ... and make the right choices ... to build a stronger economy.

Ontario's edge in the global economy is our highly skilled and educated workforce.

That is why the McGuinty government's plan will maintain the 30% tuition grant for families.

Another key to prosperity lies in the creation of good, well-paying jobs for Ontario's workers.

The McGuinty government believes in making smart investments to help businesses create jobs.

Ontario currently provides about $3.5 billion a year in support to businesses and people, through the tax system

and through dozens of grant and training programs across many ministries.

We will create a new jobs and prosperity council to work with us and help create the jobs of the future.

We will review business support programs and decide which ones should be continued and consolidated into a new jobs and prosperity fund.

This reform will create administrative savings ... some existing programs will not fit the new productivity focus so we will wind them down ... and save close to $250 million by 2014–15.

1610

The council will also help provide a sharper focus on the programs that support and develop Ontario's highly skilled workforce.

We will remove overlap and duplication by further integrating the province's employment and training programs through Employment Ontario.

To support workers, Ontario invests directly in employment and training programs.

Together, by 2014-15, business and training supports will total an investment of over $2.5 billion per year in our workers, job creation, increased productivity and the economy.

Right now, the single most important step that Ontario can take to grow the economy, Mr. Speaker, is to balance the budget.

À l'heure actuelle, la mesure la plus importante que le gouvernement de l'Ontario puisse prendre afin de stimuler l'économie est d'éliminer le déficit.

Speaker, the 2011 budget called for reductions in spending growth in order to meet our balance target date of 2017-18 ... and our government's five-year plan will keep Ontario on track to achieve this goal.

For the third year in a row, we have beaten deficit forecasts.

The deficit for 2011-12 is now projected to be $15.3 billion, which is a $1-billion improvement from the deficit forecast in last year's budget.

This forecast is based on overall expense growth of 2.5 per cent.

For 2012-13, the deficit is projected to be $15.2 billion and is consistent with our plan to balance the budget which we laid out in the 2011 budget.

In spite of this progress, there is still much more to do.

The Conference Board of Canada estimates that if no further action is taken, Ontario's deficit would reach $16 billion in 2017-18.

The Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, the Drummond commission, estimated the deficit would reach $30 billion by that time if no action is taken.

Despite the difference between these numbers, one fact is clear: Ontario needs to take strong action to balance the budget and build a better future.

L'Ontario doit prendre des mesures décisives pour éliminer le déficit et bâtir un avenir meilleur.

If action is not taken, the deficit will increase, which would hurt Ontario's ability to continue to focus on its priorities—education, health care and smart investments to create jobs.

Escalating deficits would also impair Ontario's ability to set and control its own priorities, choices and actions.

That is why, for every dollar in new revenues outlined in this budget, there are four dollars of savings and cost-containment measures.

Pour chaque dollar de nouveaux revenus décrits dans le budget, il y a quatre dollars de mesures d'économie et de restriction de coûts.

Over three years, the plan includes $17.7 billion of savings and actions to contain cost increases.

Le plan comprend des économies et des mesures de restriction des augmentations de coûts totalisant 17,7 milliards de dollars sur trois ans.

Mr. Speaker, we choose to ensure that everyone plays their part in returning the budget to balance.

For those of us fortunate enough to serve in Ontario's Legislature, we are proposing to extend the pay freeze for MPPs by a further two years, for a total of five years.

We also propose to build on the actions we have taken to end executive perks across the broader public sector.

In addition, we will propose to extend the freeze on pay for executives at our hospitals, colleges, universities, school boards and agencies for another two years, for a total of four years.

Mr. Speaker, working with the people of this great province, Ontario has become one of the most competitive places for businesses to invest and create jobs.

In total, we have reduced taxes for Ontario businesses by over $8 billion.

The result, Mr. Speaker, is a tax environment that is far more competitive for businesses now than it was eight years ago.

In fact, we are second only to California as the world's favourite destination for foreign investment in North America.

We have made Ontario a more attractive place for businesses to invest and create new jobs.

So we are asking business to do its part to help Ontario balance its budget.

Nous demandons aux entreprises de faire leur part pour aider l'Ontario à éliminer le déficit.

That is why we are proposing a freeze on further reductions of the general corporate tax rate and education taxes for businesses until the budget is balanced.

Speaker, Ontario families understand the importance of building the best education and health care.

In total, our tax plan for jobs and growth has cut taxes by $12 billion for Ontario families …and nine out of 10 Ontario taxpayers now pay less income tax.

In addition, Ontario delivers tremendous support to people through a number of programs including social assistance.

Where other governments have tried to balance their budgets on the backs of those who need assistance, the McGuinty government is maintaining current social assistance rates ... and we are increasing the Ontario child

benefit, although on a slower schedule than we would have liked.

To continue to protect the most vulnerable, we will drive reforms to our benefit programs to create a more efficient, integrated system that helps low-income Ontarians get back to work.

We will also keep the Ontario clean energy benefit in place.

While we are keeping it in place for virtually all families and smaller businesses, we are capping the benefit for larger consumers of electricity.

We know that average energy use by a family of four each month is between 800 and 1,000 kilowatt hours.

So we are proposing a cap of 3,000 kilowatt hours per month, which will generate savings of $500 million.

That would mean families and smaller businesses will continue to get the full monthly benefit, while larger users would get the benefit on their first 3,000 kilowatt hours.

That is only fair because, as we fight the deficit, it makes sense to give the most help to our families.

Ontario provides assistance to seniors for the cost of their prescription drugs through the Ontario drug benefit program.

All seniors are eligible, regardless of their income level.

This means a senior with an annual income of $300,000 receives the same benefit as a senior with an income of $30,000.

That is why we are changing the program so that high-income single seniors with net incomes of $100,000 or more and high-income senior couples with net incomes of at least $160,000 will pay a greater share of the cost of their prescription medicine.

This change will affect only about 5% of Ontario's seniors—those with the highest incomes—and it will bring Ontario in line with other provinces that have an income test for drug benefits, so that the highest-income seniors pay a greater share of their drug costs.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has told us that where Ontario charges a fee for a service, that fee should recover the full cost of providing the service.

We are raising some fees, some of which have not been raised in more than 15 years.

A few will affect people, and others will affect businesses.

They are modest increases and they serve the practical need to move towards recovering the costs of providing these services.

We welcome other restraint measures from partners in the broader public sector, such as the announcement by the Ontario Hospital Association last week that hospital executives would match MPPs by taking a five-year pay freeze.

Speaker, protecting and building on Ontario's achievements in education and health care means keeping our teachers working in our classrooms and doctors and nurses working in our health care sector.

It also honours the importance of the work that they perform and the services that they provide to Ontario families.

At the same time, the inescapable fact is that over half of the government's costs go to wages, benefits and pensions.

So, to protect what we have built together, we need to come to an understanding together.

To balance the budget while protecting results, we will need to address the question of compensation.

To that end, our government has begun negotiations and discussions with school boards and unions.

In 2004 and 2008, we secured agreements that allowed us to make real progress in our classrooms.

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Now, as we discuss the first new agreement since the global recession, we are proposing parameters that, if accepted, would allow us to protect the gains Ontario has made in the classroom.

These choices reflect the priorities of Ontarians.

Health care is also a priority for Ontarians.

We are negotiating with doctors to renew the billing arrangements that expire at the end of this month.

These payments to doctors under our health insurance plan total $11 billion or 23% of health care costs.

Mr. Speaker, together with doctors and other health care providers across the province, Ontarians now have shorter wait times for surgical procedures ... more nurses ... and better access to care.

We must not sacrifice the gains we have made, together.

And that means total physician compensation has to be maintained at current levels.

Again, Mr. Speaker, these are the right choices to make because they reflect the priorities of the people of this province.

The McGuinty government's plan keeps Ontario on track to balance the budget by 2017-18 while protecting education and health care.

In their election platforms, none of the parties represented in this Legislature set aside additional money to fund increases in compensation for public sector employees.

So I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that all parties can also agree that it is necessary to work through the collective bargaining process and other consultations to achieve results that allow Ontario to protect our positive results in schools and health care.

When we begin negotiations with other broader public sector partners, including OPSEU and AMAPCEO, we will do so with that shared objective in mind.

The McGuinty government respects the collective bargaining process and we will work through it.

Bargaining in good faith is not only the right choice to make … the Supreme Court of Canada requires it ... just as all Ontarians require that we stay on track to balance Ontario's budget.

Where agreements cannot be reached that are consistent with the government's plan to balance the

budget … and if no agreement can be struck to protect Ontario's progress in education and health care … we are prepared to propose necessary administrative and legislative measures to protect the public from service disruptions … and also to protect jobs for teachers, education staff and health care workers.

That is not a choice we would make lightly.

Respect will be our watchword when it comes to these negotiations.

Respect for our public sector partners.

Respect for the collective bargaining process.

And the respect we owe all Ontarians who are counting on us to eliminate the deficit.

Mr. Speaker, this country and this province are recognized as having some of the strongest pension plans in the world.

Unlike retirement supports in other countries, the Canada pension plan is sustainable.

Unlike in other countries, our public sector pensions are well governed and well managed.

Security in retirement for our seniors is important.

That is why we have led the national call for a modest and gradual enhancement to the Canada pension plan.

To ensure that our public pensions remain strong for people who are already retired and for those who will retire … we choose to take action.

The Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services forecasts that, if changes are not made, the cost of public sector pensions to Ontario taxpayers would nearly double between now and 2018.

This is neither sustainable nor affordable.

Cela n'est pas viable ni abordable.

Finally, many public sector employees, particularly those just starting their careers, are at the limit of what they would like to pay towards their pension.

So, when we address pensions, we are looking to make them affordable for taxpayers and sustainable for public sector workers.

One way to help make our jointly sponsored pension plans more sustainable is to change the way they address pension shortfalls.

When a public sector pension plan has suffered a pension shortfall … taxpayers and pension plan members have been called upon to make higher contributions.

We don't think it's fair to ask a single mother who earns $14 an hour to pay even more of her hard-earned tax dollars into the pension funds of others, especially when she does not have a pension of her own.

We want to work with our broader public sector partners to limit taxpayer exposure when a pension fund is in deficit … by reducing future benefits, rather than asking taxpayers to contribute even more.

And let me be clear, Mr. Speaker.

Any changes would not affect people who are already retired.

Les changements apportés ne toucheraient pas les personnes à la retraite.

It would only affect future benefits, not those already earned.

We will consult with the opposition parties, and start a dialogue with Ontarians—those with and without public sector pensions—before we introduce legislation that would strengthen our pension plans.

Employees in many public sector plans contribute less than their employers do to their pensions.

We are asking public sector workers to share equally the ongoing costs of their pensions with their employers.

This is only fair … and it will again help protect the gains we've made in education and health care.

Research shows that large pension plans generate higher returns at lower cost than smaller plans.

In spite of this, Ontario has about 80 smaller pension plans.

For example, Ontario's 20 publicly funded universities have more than 25 pension plans.

The government will propose legislation this fall that would pool investment management functions of smaller public sector pensions to help put them on a more secure footing.

Mr. Speaker, we will build on a made-in-Ontario model that has been recognized by others as an example to the world—to make the management of our public sector pensions even stronger.

Speaker, the 2012 budget presents a strong plan to move forward and transform public services—to change the way they are delivered to give Ontario families better value for money and better results.

The plan includes choices that will lay the path to a better future.

The right choices—which will ensure that Ontario families are receiving the best possible service and the highest value for tax dollars.

We will use office space more efficiently to reduce the government's real estate footprint by about one million square feet.

We will propose legislation that allows ServiceOntario to help us maintain high-quality services for families—at lower cost—through public–private partnership models.

We will maintain the Polar Bear Express, which delivers a vital public service to isolated parts of the province … while divesting other parts of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission's operation because taxpayers can no longer maintain a subsidy of $400 per ticket on its passenger rail service.

And we will not stop there, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue looking for additional savings across government while providing quality public services for Ontario families.

And we welcome good ideas—from people, from business owners, economists and the opposition—on how to best find these savings.

We will adopt those ideas, where we find them.

Indeed, the opposition parties will see some of their ideas reflected in this budget.

We recognize, however, that the responsibility falls to us, as a government, to keep Ontario on track to eliminate the deficit through strong action.

Speaker, Ontarians know from experience that deep, arbitrary across-the-board cuts create deficits in education … they create deficits in health care … and they create deficits in core infrastructure.

Evidence shows that across-the-board cuts create a trampoline effect … in other words, the money saved in the short term only leads to higher costs in the long run when the bill comes due.

So, we choose to reject that approach.

We know what the right choices are when it comes to education and health care.

Some would have us cut full-day kindergarten for our early learners.

Mr. Speaker, we choose to keep it.

Some choose to increase class sizes in our early grades.

We choose to keep them small.

Some would choose to cut nearly 10,000 teaching jobs and 10,000 non-teaching jobs, eroding the quality of our kids' education.

Mr. Speaker, we choose to protect those jobs.

Some would let people wait longer for medical care.

We choose to keep the shortest surgical wait times in Canada … and be assured, Mr. Speaker, when we make these choices … we will choose protecting education and health care—every single time.

And that's because that is the right choice.

You know, Ontario families make difficult choices every day.

Every day, they make responsible decisions for themselves to create a better future for their families, their children and their grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, we choose to do what Ontarians themselves are doing.

We are taking a good hard look at our financial circumstances.

We are thoughtfully examining the choices we can make, today … that will best position us for long-term success.

Because when we make the right choices about our government's finances … we will balance the budget.

The right choices create confidence among investors and the markets.

When we make investments in a strong, well-trained and healthy workforce … it creates confidence among the businesses that want to set up shop and create jobs here in Ontario.

The McGuinty government's plan will create a stronger economy … a better quality of life … and a better future for all Ontario families.

The choices we are making are the right choices to meet today's challenges.

They are fair, they are responsible and ensure that all of us have a role to play in overcoming these challenges.

To build a stronger, a brighter, and a more confident future for Ontario.

Our Ontario.

The greatest province … in the best country in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

The official opposition House leader and member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey has moved adjournment of the debate. Agreed? Agreed.

Debate adjourned.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Does the Minister of Finance wish to offer us a bill?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Yes. I would ask the House to revert to introduction of bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All in favour? Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

STRONG ACTION FOR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR UNE ACTION ÉNERGIQUE POUR L'ONTARIO (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mr. Duncan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 55, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister for a short statement? I guess not.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 o'clock a.m.

The House adjourned at 1634.

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Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margarett R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

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Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

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Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Ernie Hardeman, Tracy MacCharles
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 28 March 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 28 mars 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT ACT (RENT INCREASE GUIDELINE), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION (TAUX LÉGAL D'AUGMENTATION DES LOYERS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 27, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the folllowing bill:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline / Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation en ce qui concerne le taux légal d'augmentation des loyers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: As the Ontario PC critic for municipal affairs and housing, I stand here on behalf of my leader, Tim Hudak, and our caucus, and am so pleased to speak to Bill 19, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 in respect of the rent increase guideline.

I have to say, Speaker, that I've thought quite a bit about our position since the bill was introduced by the Minister of Municipal Affairs on December 6 of last year. In a perfect world, this legislation just might be something that our party could have supported, but we know clearly that when it comes to housing in the province of Ontario, whether you're coming at the issue from the perspective of a landlord, a tenant or a service provider in the municipal sector, the situation is far from perfect. All sides of this issue face serious challenges.

We know that too many Ontarians—1.31 million tenant households—are stretched to the limit trying to pay their household bills, including their rents. We know that some 20% of these households spend more than 50% of their income on rent, while some 32% are in core need, meaning that their current accommodation fails to meet standards of adequacy, suitability and, of course, affordability. That's too many households, Speaker. Our party believes that we must take immediate action to make life more affordable for all Ontarians.

We know that that's just the problem faced by those who actually have a roof over their heads. Speaker, there are 142,000 Ontarians now waiting on the affordable housing list. Again, this bill isn't going to help them get that safe, secure place to raise their families.

It's certainly not going to offer anything for families in Leeds–Grenville. As I speak today, there are more than 500 families on the waiting list for affordable housing units. They're not going to be comforted by this bill at all, Speaker. When people contact my constituency office about housing issues, it's not to talk about the formula used to calculate rent increases; it's not the formula that they want to talk to me about. There's a bunch of questions that they have: "Why can it take up to three years"—three years—"for a family to move from the wait-list into a unit?" Three years, Speaker. Or: "Why does the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville lack the provincial support to do basic maintenance on the unit I'm living in?" Those are questions I get asked all the time, and I don't see anything in Bill 19 shortening their wait time one day, or helping to get their roof repaired any faster.

I don't see it changing another alarming trend in the affordable housing sector either. I spoke to Alison Tutak, director of human services with the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville, and she shared some interesting information on how the amount of time people remain in rent-geared-to-income or some other forms of affordable housing has changed over the years. She noted that 15 years ago, a family or individual might be in a unit for one to two years before they're able to get themselves back on their feet. Now, Speaker, it takes many years, and we know why: It's because life in Ontario, under Dalton McGuinty, has become unaffordable for families.

We have hundreds of thousands of people without work while the HST and soaring hydro rates, along with increased fees, are eating away at what little disposable income people have. Under Dalton McGuinty, hydro rates have increased eight times since 2003, for a total of 84%. And if you're a family with a smart meter at your home, well, you've seen your bill go up a staggering 150%. As a result, people find themselves having to stay in these units for years and years and years while the wait-lists just keep growing and growing.

It's important to remember that when we talk about housing, it's not just bricks and mortar—or, in the case of this legislation, a formula used to calculate how much rent is going to go up for someone the coming year. A

home isn't an abstract concept, Speaker. After food and water, I suggest it's the most basic of our needs. Having a place to call home gives people the basis on which everything else in life begins. Without it, there's no hope to maintain employment or get the education and necessary training to break that cycle of poverty.

I was given the great honour to serve the people of Leeds–Grenville in a by-election in March 2010. Just 18 months after that by-election, we were on the campaign trail again. I've knocked on a lot of doors in the last two years, and I think I have a pretty good understanding of the challenges facing families in my riding. To be honest, it's not just families in my riding; it's families across all of our 107 ridings in the province of Ontario. Too many people in this province are just one missed paycheque away from finding themselves either at the mercy of their landlord or they're out on the street.

0910

But it's not just tenants who are feeling the pinch in Ontario. The reality is that landlords also, in this province, have seen their costs going up and up and up, particularly those small landlords that I speak to in my riding. Far from the fat-cat, Cadillac-driving, cigar-chomping caricature that they're painted as, all too often these folks are incorrectly categorized, are demonized. Those landlords that I've met in my riding are just small, hard-working people. They're just small business people.

The landlords in my riding speak to me right now, saying that the rental business is a money-losing operation. Considering that the cost of operating rental units is rising by up to 6% every year, we need to seriously consider the impact of this on landlords in any discussion we have on a housing strategy for the province of Ontario. Instead, Speaker, the minister has simply grabbed a number out of the air—in this case, 2.5%—and she has decided that that's going to be the cap that rents are going to be capped at. She's done that knowing that policies introduced by her government, such as the green energy experiments that have put energy bills through the roof, and the HST, which has driven up costs for things like building repairs and maintenance—those costs are not subject to any cap. They just keep going up and up and up every year.

We also need to pay attention to the reality of where rents stand when adjusted for inflation. Look at those real rents in the most recent report issued by CMHC. At the end of last year, the Ontario average two-bedroom monthly rent, adjusted for inflation, was $840—$43 less than where it stood in 2002. I noticed that the minister yesterday failed to mention that part of the CMHC press release in her remarks. So in the interest of having a full debate, I thought it was important for me to add this to the discussion.

Again, I'm afraid that this legislation fails to consider the impact of imposing that arbitrary 2.5% ceiling on rent increases and how it will affect the ability to pay, indeed for landlords to remain in the housing business, and on the availability of housing. It's most disappointing that the minister has brought in this legislation without even consulting the province's landlords to find out what impact that will have on rental properties.

As Vince Brescia, president and CEO of the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario, said in reaction to the bill: "We understand the government's efforts to mitigate price volatility, but setting an arbitrary price ceiling fails to recognize that housing industry costs, like repairs and maintenance, are not subject to any price caps. The government is unilaterally imposing a cap without any discussion with an entire industry and is initiating a policy that will be particularly devastating for small landlords." That's the quote. Speaker, that's an organization that represents 2,200 small landlords across the province, and they've been entirely shut out of this process.

So against that backdrop where both landlords and tenants are facing unprecedented strain on their budgets, this is the bill that the minister brings in. It's a bill that I can best describe as window dressing. It looks good from a distance, but upon closer inspection, it's just an attempt to gloss over a much larger problem. That's why our Ontario PC caucus simply cannot support this bill. To do so would be sending a message that Bill 19 will actually make a real difference to those who either pay rent or collect it. In reality, Speaker, it won't. And our caucus, in good conscience, cannot be party to any attempt to fool Ontarians to think that it will. We're not going to play that game.

Listening to the minister yesterday—I listened very carefully to what she said; I didn't utter a word; I listened to every single word she said—I actually felt a bit sorry for the minister, having to stand for an hour in this House and speak about a bill that, at the end of the day—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Could the member from Ottawa take his sidebar outside, please?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My apologies, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Steve Clark: —having to stand here in this House for an hour to talk about a bill that, at the end of the day, will do exactly what the existing rent increase guideline formula in the act already does.

My colleague the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke put it well. He said the minister sounded like someone seeking to be reappointed to a job. I have to say that if I was the one doing the hiring, I'm not sure she'd get that job, based on what I heard and what I've read in this bill. While she may have talked a good game and left us with plenty of feel-good quotes and the impression that their government has made a difference, we all know—all of us—that that's far from reality. As the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke put it, she didn't really talk much about the bill, because there's not much in the bill to talk about.

I think we all need to remember, in the context of this debate, where the government is trying to paint itself as the great defender of the household budget. But what happened in this House on November 24 of last year, I think, said it all. On that day, the PC and NDP caucuses

stood united to pass Bill 4, the Retail Sales Tax Amendment Act (HST Rebate for Home Heating), introduced by the member for Algoma–Manitoulin. By a vote of 54 to 50, Speaker, as we all remember, this House passed legislation to give residents of the province of Ontario a break on the HST on their home heating costs.

That was something that made a real impact on family budgets, and that's why the opposition stood united that day. But, shockingly, this arrogant government is following the ridiculous "major minority" mantra of Premier McGuinty, refusing—refusing—to move Bill 4 to committee and ultimately back here for third reading.

I attended many events in my riding after Bill 4 was passed, and I have to tell you, people were thrilled that we listened, that members of the opposition listened. So you can imagine, Speaker, the look of disbelief when I tell them that the government's position is to so blatantly ignore the wishes of this House and, by extension, the constituents we all represent.

We've all witnessed the government's shameful handling of the Ornge scandal, which is nothing short of a scandal in itself. We watched as the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care refused to accept responsibility for her utter mismanagement of this file and thumbed her nose at the traditions of the very institution she was elected to serve. I'll get to that more later, Speaker.

There are clear signs that the system is failing, as the government continues to allow a bill that would offer real relief for families to sit in limbo.

We have to take a look at where this particular piece of legislation is getting us. Bill 19 proposes to put a floor and a ceiling on the annual rent increase guideline that is announced by the ministry every summer. We all well know the genesis of this bill and where it came from. Last year the ministry announced a 3.1% increase guideline for 2012. Predictably, that produced an outcry from tenants' groups, many of whom were based, I believe, in the minister's own riding. This bill is nothing more than the minister's attempt to convince those tenant groups that she and the government are on their side.

0920

Bill 19 would mandate that while the guideline would continue to be based on the annual consumer price index for Ontario as reported by Statistics Canada, the increase will not fall below 1%, nor would it be raised to over 2.5%. Yet when we look at the past history of the rent increase guidelines, when we look at those, the history, we see just how empty this bill really is and why tenants' groups are not fooled.

What are tenants' advocacy groups saying about Bill 19? Let me quote to you from a release issued by the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario after this bill was introduced: "Why is the government doing so little to protect the homes of hundreds of thousands of tenants after promising so much more?" asks Ken Hale, director of advocacy and legal services at the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario. A further quote: "In the real world, tenants are losing their jobs, facing demands for wage freezes and rollbacks or living with a 1% increase in their social assistance cheques." Speaker, obviously that was written prior to yesterday's budget.

His quote goes on, "In the real world, when tenants move, there is no limit on the rent increases that a landlord can charge an incoming tenant in any private market building." That's what Mr. Hale said. Here's the bottom line: "All tenants deserve to be protected from unaffordable rent increases, including the 300,000 tenant households that live in buildings that are exempt from rent regulation, and we hope the minister amends the bill to provide them this protection." So you heard that.

The minister spoke yesterday. She spoke about knocking on thousands of doors in apartment units and speaking with tenants who told her they need help in paying the rent. She promised to do something, and her response is Bill 19. What are those tenant advocacy groups telling you? Well, the one I just read is telling her to amend the bill; it's telling her to make changes, go back to the drawing board.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Could the member for Ottawa take his seat.

The member from Ottawa Centre, I asked before: If he wants to hold court, to do it outside the chamber. He seems to have not listened and moved over to the other side to hold another sidebar. Last warning.

Mr. Steve Clark: He's a very social member, Speaker.

Like me, the tenants' groups know this legislation won't really change a thing. It's an attempt by the government to really be seen as doing something at a time when I believe real, substantive change is necessary. It's quite ironic that this government has crafted a piece of legislation aimed to narrowcast a message to such a select group of stakeholders, and even the group they're trying to appease has called it a failure.

Here are the facts, Speaker. Over the past 10 years, the average rent increase was 2.1%, and over the last five years, the average has been just 1.8%. So what does that tell us? It indicates that the present rent increase guideline formula, as it now exists, already keeps the annual figure between what's proposed here in the legislation.

Let's also take a look at the 3.1% increase for 2012 that caused the government to put this legislation on the table. Remember that after the 2011 guideline, the rent increases were 0.7%. That's a two-year average of 1.9%, which is again right in the middle of the floor and the ceiling that's proposed by Bill 19. On average, the formula used to determine the annual rent increase in the province actually does what the legislation seeks to codify.

In her remarks yesterday, the minister cited the Poverty by Postal Code 2: Vertical Poverty study released by the United Way. The minister noted that the study found that almost half of the tenants interviewed said they worry about paying the rent each month. One in four said they do without things every month in order to pay their rent, and one in three indicated that they and their family do without necessities. So it's insulting to the authors of that

study to have it quoted in the context of what the minister purports her bill will do.

She knows that if we proclaim this bill, nothing would change for those tenants cited in the United Way study. She knows that the average increase already falls between the guidelines proposed in Bill 19. It's already happening, Speaker. This isn't the part of the Residential Tenancies Act or the broader housing issue that's in the province that's broken and needs attention.

What disappoints me most as the opposition critic for municipal affairs and housing is that this legislation lacks imagination completely on the housing file. We have before us an ideal opportunity to roll up our sleeves and make some substantive, impactful changes to housing legislation that would make a real difference in people's lives.

This is a minority Parliament. It's the first minority Parliament we've had in more than 25 years, and I think, Speaker, in that spirit, I would have hoped that there would have been far more ambitious legislation coming forward from the government on the housing file. But instead, as we've seen time after time after time, bills are brought before this House and the government is choosing to play politics. They'd rather come here with a do-nothing bill designed with one purpose in mind, and that's to paint the opposition—and in our case, the Progressive Conservatives—as being against tenants. I already heard a few catcalls this morning.

Shamefully, the government is doing the same thing by refusing to work with the opposition on the issue of bullying. They've ignored an unprecedented opportunity to help kids just so they can force a vote on an inferior bill and run to the mike and badmouth the PC MPPs. It's cheap politics, Speaker, and Ontarians, I suggest, are disgusted with it. Frankly, it demeans the stature of this place.

I want to thank the member for Nepean–Carleton for her eloquent address in our lead earlier this week. She did exactly what Ontarians want. They want those two bills merged.

Speaker, let me be clear: It's not because we're against tenants that I and our caucus don't support Bill 19. We don't support it because it's not going to do anything to make rent more affordable or the wait-list for housing less lengthy in the long run. Based on the average over the past 10 years, the rent you'll be paying a decade from now won't differ by even 1% based on this bill. There's so little here, in fact, that I can't even recommend that our caucus members hold their nose and vote in favour of it at second reading while it goes into committee. No amount of committee work is going to improve this bill because, simply, there's no meat on the bones.

I mentioned this earlier, but what really disappoints me is how limited in scope this bill really is. It's so completely without any ambition on the part of the minister or this government. I've said that the minister has chosen to ignore the real problems facing landlords and tenants. I could not believe my ears yesterday when I heard the minister state that she believes this bill represents the sum total of what either landlords or tenants require. I couldn't believe it.

Here's what she said. I'm going to quote the minister. "The act, we believe, does not at this time need significant or deep reform, but as the circumstances change for those who rent, we'll listen. We'll be open to amending the legislation" as "necessary, but at this point we're going to focus on" this "one particular area."

0930

That's unbelievable, Speaker. Her quote: "As the circumstances change for those who rent, we'll listen." Are you kidding me? You have to be kidding me. How much worse can it get for people in the province of Ontario to try to keep a roof over their heads before this government is going to wake up to the fact of what we've seen already? We have to make some substantive changes.

She took a lot of time yesterday to quote a lot of statistics, but hearing those comments, I have to ask: Did she really look at the statistics in front of her? Because if she did, if she truly looked at the statistics and spoke to tenants and landlords, she'd have come up with a much more meaningful piece of legislation than the one we're debating this morning.

Let's take a look at some of these situations that this government apparently—apparently—doesn't consider to address in this province. I've met with many landlords in my constituency office, and one of their real concerns is the Landlord and Tenant Board. Where's the legislation from this government to bring some substantive reform to the board and the way it works—or, more appropriately, the way it doesn't work?

I recently met with Ted Carr. Ted's a landlord in Brockville who tries very hard to treat his tenants fairly and accommodate them when they're late with their rent—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I think the minister is a little out of line, and if she has anything to say to me, we'll talk in the back.

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to Ted Carr, Speaker. Ted's a small landlord in my riding. He tries to treat his tenants fairly. He tries to accommodate them when they're late with their rent. He knows that it's better to work with a tenant than to face the dreaded alternative of a trip to the Landlord and Tenant Board. It just creates animosity between the two parties, and at the end of the day, it makes him look to fill an empty unit. As much as he tries to be fair, though, inevitably there are going to be disputes, and some of those disputes will end up before the board.

I want to try to capture, this morning, in Ted's own words, his experience from a small landlord's perspective. "I have, and continue to have, money outstanding from a tenant, this after many requests for payment, different hearings and appearing at different levels of the system, the bureaucracy, getting several judgments, yet I still have money outstanding.

"Not many have the time, the patience or the resources to litigate these matters. It is the opinion of this landlord

that the system, which has seen benefits over the years, has to be simplified, the process more friendly.... One has no idea until they experience this bureaucracy from a person with no idea of where to start, the frustration of where to turn or what to do now. To go to the tribunal to be turned away because of an incorrect process, incorrect form served, to hear that the tenant has access to duty counsel, while the landlord has no support."

He ends by stating, "The KISS system would be of some benefit here"—and we all know what the KISS system is: Keep it Simple, Stupid. I'm not directing that at anybody. That's right, Speaker. He's saying we need to simplify and streamline the process.

Mike Gordon is another Brockville landlord, and he has brought some concerns recently in regard to the Landlord and Tenant Act as well. Mike is particularly upset about the ability of landlords to evict tenants who wilfully cause damage to property. We're talking, in his case, several thousands of dollars; it's serious stuff. I know my predecessor in the role as opposition critic for municipal affairs and housing, Joyce Savoline—she's very thoughtful, a former member for Burlington, and served the people in that riding well. She brought forward a bill to address this particular issue, and it really struck a balance, I think, between providing landlords with some protection yet not burdening tenants with exorbitant costs. Ms. Savoline's bill proposed to allow landlords to collect a damage deposit of no more than 25% of one month's rent from tenants when they sign a lease.

I think the current Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing should go back. She should review Ms. Savoline's speech during the second reading debate on her bill. She spoke of how the need for damage deposit legislation was particularly acute, given the impact of the HST on small business landlords. I want to quote her words. "These additional costs of the HST" dramatically "increase costs for landlords, and many have no choice but to dip into their reserve funds in order to make up for the difference in cost. The depletion of reserve funds that are there for emergencies is a very bad idea. Those funds are not to be used for things like ongoing maintenance. This would have serious implications for the rental housing industry." That was her quote, Speaker.

What she was warning of is that the increasing cost of doing business for landlords as a result of the HST could force some of them to fold. When they do, it doesn't just have an impact on local economies; the loss of those units makes it even more difficult for people to find a place to call home. So her bill, I think, was a progressive step to solve a real problem, like one that Mike Gordon has brought to my attention. Those are the types of reform that I'd like to see come forward from this government for debate.

Yesterday, the minister, in her speech, also talked about the fact that she met with 50 delegations at the recent Rural Ontario Municipal Association and the Ontario Good Roads Association combined conference, ROMA/OGRA. She indicated that housing was a big topic of discussion; I'm sure it was. Again, I don't think any of those delegations that came to speak to her about housing are going to be calling me up to urge me to support this bill because it solves their issues. Far from it. If municipalities across Ontario—and I've spoken to many of them. I'm sure staff and elected officials alike were shocked to hear that this was the bill, Bill 19, that she brought forward. If this is the only piece of legislation on the housing front, God help us.

So I'm pleased to hear that she took the time; I'm pleased that the minister sat at ROMA/OGRA. I'm disappointed for her that she didn't listen to those municipal officials, because—I wonder if, during those meetings, she heard about a resolution that originated from the Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board and has since been endorsed by a number of municipalities across the province. Indeed, in my riding, the ministry's social housing service provider is the joint services committee of the united counties of Leeds and Grenville, and they passed the resolution on February 10. Here's what it says, and I hope the minister hears this as well.

"Whereas social housing is an integral part of the province's social services; and

"Whereas the costs for social housing have more than doubled in some areas since funding was established and the services were transferred to the municipalities; and

"Whereas the province has failed to maintain 50/50 cost share since 2001; and

"Whereas the province has failed to provide adequate funding to share in the economic and operating increases; and

"Whereas the province has failed to provide adequate funding for existing and capital improvements; and

"Whereas the funding for social housing services across the province is becoming increasingly inequitable;

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"Therefore be it resolved by the Joint Services Committee of Leeds and Grenville:

"(1) That the Joint Services Committee of Leeds and Grenville supports the resolution of the Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board and petitions the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to appropriately fund the actual costs associated with" housing.

Reading that, it doesn't sound like an ill-conceived attempt at rent control in Bill 19 is going to address the concerns of municipalities who are already delivering social housing services.

I know that the minister is also well aware of the concerns that her ministry's service providers at the municipal level have with the past bill, Bill 140. Under that legislation, passed prior to the fall election, service managers are ordered to come up with a 10-year affordable housing plan for their municipality. Basically, what the government is saying is, "We can't really figure this out, so you guys have to take a stab at it and come back to us at some other point in the future."

This government created LHINs to insulate the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and now they're trying to absolve themselves from their responsibility of delivering an affordable housing strategy by passing the buck to municipalities. Oh, they've made sure to provide some funding to cover administration costs and to develop some of these plans a little bit here and a little bit there. The minister did say that they'd offer some guidance, so at least she's going to provide that.

This bill that we're debating today will do nothing, absolutely nothing, to address the ongoing maintenance issues that plague social housing units. It's estimated that there is a $3-billion repair backlog because the government simply hasn't made the right investments. But there's more when it comes from groups who wish to seek reform.

Last week, I was pleased to meet with members of the Ontario Co-operative Association here at Queen's Park at a reception. They've also met with me to discuss some of the legislation that they see in their sector. We know they've been waiting for years for this government to make a simple legislative change to resolve a problem that all sides of this House have recognized needs to be fixed.

The member for Etobicoke Centre even put forward a private member's bill during the last session. Bill 198 would have amended the Co-operative Corporations Act and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, to finally put an end to the situation where co-ops and their tenants must go before the courts to resolve their disputes. We know that this situation creates the need for drawn-out, costly proceedings that hurt tenants and landlords alike. So again, I ask: If we all agree that it makes sense, where is the legislation to give co-ops access to the Landlord and Tenant Board? It's like everything of substance that we could see being done in this file is just nowhere to be found in this bill.

Yesterday I had the pleasure of speaking with John Argue from Parkdale Community Legal Services. John sent me an email, and we had a nice discussion about some of the concerns and some of the amendments that he feels should be added to Bill 19. He had some great ideas, but I really think that they're so substantive that the best approach isn't to do it at committee but to tell the minister to go back and start over. I really do. I think that's the only way.

One of the points he reminded me of was a private member's bill introduced during the last session by Norm Sterling, who was then the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills. Mr. Sterling's Bill 204—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: I hear some support from Mr. Sergio for Bill 204. I'm glad you supported Bill 204.

That bill, Speaker, to remind the member opposite, looked at the fact that, under the Residential Tenancies Act, any residence built after 1991 is not subject to rent regulation. Indeed, that's the case with the bill we're debating here today. Again, this is an issue that stakeholders in the province's housing sector want to know their elected representatives are taking a serious look at.

In the aftermath of last October's election, there was a lot of talk—a lot of talk—about how this minority Parliament might actually be a good thing for Ontarians. People speculated that it was an opportunity for the government to actually engage opposition parties and work with them on legislation. But the government has poisoned that environment with the Premier's talk of this whole "major minority," and it's continued with the way they've approached the introduction of Bill 13. It's also pitting region against region with Bill 11, and refusing to back Bill 4 or to appoint the select committee to investigate Ornge—so much for a spirit of bipartisan co-operation to help us solve the real problems that Ontarians face in their day-to-day lives. It's very disappointing to me.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It is disappointing.

Mr. Steve Clark: Very disappointing.

We had an opportunity to make some real, substantive changes. It's my great privilege to have met with so many stakeholders about the housing file, and I can talk for hours, I suggest, on some of the wonderful suggestions that they've brought forward.

One of them, which I just want to give a quick shout-out for, is a report called A Housing Benefit for Ontario: One Housing Solution for a Poverty Reduction Strategy. It's a coalition that included the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, the Greater Toronto Apartment Association, the Daily Bread Food Bank, and two charitable foundations, the Metcalf Foundation and the Atkinson Charitable Foundation. So there you've got a cross-section of tenant groups, landlords, poverty reduction advocates, charitable foundations, all working together to try to solve a problem. And if they can do it, I have to ask, for people who are watching the debate at home, if those groups, which represent all sides of the sector, can get together and table a report on an improvement like a housing benefit, why can't we? It makes absolutely no sense to me.

I mentioned earlier the government's total disregard to cross party lines. I mentioned Bill 11, the eastern and the southwestern fund, and how they're pitting areas against each other; and Bill 13, which I mentioned earlier, that we couldn't seem to get any agreement on between Bill 13 and Bill 14, which is a sad state. But it's the total lack of even recognition by this government that there's a problem.

The minister showed up yesterday, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. She showed up about 10 after 10 yesterday and tried to retract or modify details that she'd said—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: Come on, you know what it is. This House—she stood right in her place.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Right there.

Mr. Steve Clark: She stood right there by her chair, and when asked repeated questions by the member of Newmarket–Aurora, she said—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: Mr. Sergio, she said that she would abide by the wishes of this House. This House voted—the will of the Legislature.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from York West is a little exuberant. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Clark: I think, Speaker, we need to draw a line in the sand when it comes to the select committee—

Mr. Mario Sergio: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from York West.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Mr. Speaker, I remind the member that we are dealing with Bill 19. It has nothing to do with the Minister of Health. This is a housing issue—the Landlord and Tenant Act. It's got nothing to do with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I would—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I thank the member for his input. That's not a point of order. It will be up to me to distinguish if he gets off the road. Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order from the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Just to make it very clear, I believe what my colleague is doing is just setting the example of the arrogance of this minority government and what they have been doing to this assembly since they have been re-elected—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for that compliment you gave them, but I don't think that was necessary. Continue, please.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to make one final comment on that. I think we all expect that when the will of this Legislature comes forward for an all-party select committee on Ornge, the minister is going to do what she says she's going to do. I believe quite sufficiently that it's time, because of their arrogance in regard to the all-party select committee on Ornge, That I move to end debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Clark has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of this House that the motion carry? I think the ayes have it.

All in favour, say "aye."

Opposed, say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it. We'll call in the members for a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 0951 to 1015.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Clark has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carries?

All in favour, please stand and remain standing until the Clerk counts.

All those opposed, please stand.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 23; the nays are 40.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe the motion is defeated.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House will be recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my pleasure today to welcome to the House a couple of broadcasting individuals: Sue Storr and Lindsay Hendrikx from Country 103.9 FM and 1070 AM. They're doing a live call-in show back to Sarnia–Lambton and all across southwestern Ontario. Welcome them to the House, please.

Ms. Soo Wong: Shortly, the students from Dr. Norman Bethune, along with the teachers Evita and Shannon, will be visiting the Legislature. I want to welcome them to the House.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome the parents of page Lauren Barry from the Tweed area and Prince Edwards–Hastings riding: Chris Barry, who's a sergeant with the Belleville Police Service; and Lauren's mom, Joanne Barry, who's a principal at Madoc township school. Also her aunt, Paula Adam, is here, and her best friend, Marin Love, is here as well. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, I'd like to welcome, from Thunder Bay and the Ontario Health Coalition, Suzanne Pulice and Sara Williamson.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd also welcome family members of page Lauren Barry: her grandparents, Ian and Bonnie McQuarrie, from Millbrook in my riding; and her great-uncle, Robert Fisher. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce the family of page Felix Weber. They're in the members' west gallery today. I'd like to introduce Felix Weber, Sr.; Bernice Felix-Passchier, Felix's mother; and Lucas Weber, Felix's brother.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): With the indulgence of the House, I want to report to the House that the pages put on a spectacular performance delivering the budget yesterday to each member. Although not a new record, it was very close, at 28.8 seconds; and considering the handicap of the size of the package, I think they deserve our very large thank you. It was a prize performance. Thank you, pages.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes. I would like to have the House consider the Roger Maris rule—an asterisk, because even though the document itself was rather vacuous, it was voluminous.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know the member tries his very hardest to always get in a shot—well

taken. I will confer with the table as to whether or not the asterisk will suffice, but it is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, there are currently 600,000 unemployed women and men in the province of Ontario. That's equivalent to the combined populations of Brampton and Burlington.

One of the major omissions in your budget was any kind of jobs plan. In fact, it was a breathtaking omission.

Premier, can you tell us one new initiative in your budget to help the private sector create jobs in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I welcome the question, Speaker. I'm looking forward to speaking about the job-creating aspects of the budget. I would draw to my honourable colleague, first of all, our $35-billion, three-year infrastructure plan that creates, on average, every year, 100,000 jobs. I'd also encourage my honourable colleague to take a look at our new jobs and prosperity fund. That's some $2 billion. We will work with both the private sector and labour and academia and determine the very best way possible for us to deploy those resources in a way that creates new jobs and enhances productivity in the province of Ontario.

I remind my honourable colleague as well that our healthy home renovation tax credit will create 10,500 jobs every year. The Ring of Fire speaks to 1,500 permanent jobs. The Pan Am athletes' village is 5,200 jobs. This morning, Toyota announced 400 new jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier. That's the same old rhetoric; those are old promises that you're trying to polish up again. In fact, all the jobs and prosperity fund is is a rejigging of plans you've already had that don't work. I know you believe—you believe—that the economy grows itself. Here's the difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives: We believe you can't simply cut yourself to prosperity; you need a pro-jobs, pro-growth plan, new ideas that take us out of this jobs crisis in the province of Ontario. And the only single new idea, Premier, the only new idea that you had in your budget was setting up a prosperity council—more people to sit around a table thinking about what they could do. We want to see action. We want to see progress today. We want to see a jobs plan that will put those 600,000 men and women back to work in the province of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I think my honourable colleague will be interested in knowing how it is that the Dominion Bond Rating Service has pronounced itself on our budget within the past hour: "The highly anticipated fiscal plan is encouraging, as it reiterates the province's objective to return to balance by 2017-18, maintains the deficit and debt projections for the years to come, and ... sheds more light on a strategy to be used to restore fiscal sustainability....

"Overall, DBRS views the continuation of the fiscal recovery plan and the increasing emphasis on cost containment as an encouraging step in the right direction."

And we've maintained our credit standing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, Premier, again, your lack of any kind of jobs plan, given that your spending and overtaxing have reduced Ontario to a have-not province—that omission, sir, on the jobs is absolutely breathtaking. It is a huge mistake and it's a failure to Ontario families. The Premier claims he's got new ideas for the Ring of Fire; there's no new ideas, no numbers, no action—all kinds of reviews, all kinds of studies, all kinds of new councils—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Our plan to create 200,000 jobs in the skilled trades by modernizing our apprenticeship system; reducing, not increasing, business access to open us up for investment again; getting energy policy about reliability and affordability, not big handouts at 10 times the price of power: These are good ideas for a real jobs plan to get our economy moving again. Premier, will you accept our ideas?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would refer my honourable colleague to page 126 of the budget. What it says there, what it shows in a graph, is that since 2009—since the depths of the recession—Ontario alone has created as many jobs as the other nine provinces combined. That's our record on jobs.

I outlined in my first answer the many ways in which we'll be creating new jobs in the province of Ontario. Here's another way we'll be supporting our jobs: My honourable colleague would have us shut down full-day kindergarten and lay off 20,000 people who work inside our schools—20,000 jobs. We're standing up for those jobs, just as we are for all the other jobs that we'll create through our infrastructure plan to developing the Ring of Fire and through our jobs and prosperity fund.

1040

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: I looked at page 126. I'm not going to argue: The McGuinty government has an incredible capacity to increase the size and cost of government. It has grown out of hand. I'm not going to argue with that. We can't hold a candle to your record.

But I'm talking about good private sector jobs. We've lost 60,000 since the election alone. Our plan will make

Ontario a leader again in Confederation. We believe in a brighter future for the province of Ontario. We believe that we can be the engine of growth for Canada and not a have-not province with our hand out for welfare payments from the others.

Premier, I think Ontario families, the 600,000 who are out of work, those who are unemployed, are absolutely incredulous that you had no jobs plan whatsoever. If you're out of ideas, you're welcome to ours. Which of our policies will you adopt to help Ontario lead again?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The facts tell a far different story from the Leader of the Opposition, who is playing chicken with Ontario's credit rating: 300,000 net new jobs since the bottom of the recession, 121,000 net new jobs last year—one year.

Mr. Speaker, unemployment has gone from 9.4% to 7.7%. We have more to do. We have laid out a carefully crafted job strategy that will see us investing record sums of money—not just in apprenticeship training; in infrastructure, across the board; 170,000 new jobs, a strong plan for a bright future. That party and that leader have no plan. They have cheap talk and a lot of rhetoric—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): One moment, please. Thank you.

It's to the point where I'm a little concerned that this is going to be nothing more than a shouting match to shout each other down. I would ask all members, especially the member from York West, who—I explain to other members that when I'm speaking, there is to be quiet, and I appreciate that. I'm trying to make a point here. Shouting each other down is not parliamentary. Maybe making a jibe might be, but this is getting ridiculous.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker. I'm obviously disappointed that the Premier has not responded on our ideas to help create jobs and get our economy moving again. The finance minister uses the same worn talking points, albeit—you're right, Speaker—with more volume than the Premier. But there is nothing in there to give hope to those 600,000 unemployed women and men in our province, not a single new idea to create private sector jobs except something you're calling a prosperity council, which is going to have a meeting.

Sir, that's not good enough. We need a new plan that will get our economy moving again to make Ontario a leader: apprenticeship reform; lowering, not increasing, business taxes; making energy about reliability and affordability; and getting out of the way of business, getting behind them, rolling out the red carpet, not more red tape. That's our Ontario PC plan.

Will you take our plan and get Ontario's economy moving again?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Well, here's what Patricia Croft, the former chief economist of RBC Global Asset Management, had to say. She says, "I disagree with Mr. Hudak. He's talking about swift action, and swift action would mean a deep recession ... swift action in terms of cutting spending even further or raising taxes. So this budget must balance austerity with growth; that's a very tough act but I think they've done a pretty good job."

I'm with Patricia Croft on that. I think she's right. I don't think you have a clue as to what you would do if you were in our position.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Finance Minister, I just outlined it in five straight questions. You know what? I'm not going to argue with the finance minister. If you want a slow, crawling pace of reform, or no reform at all, then you've got Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals. But, yeah, we actually want to see some action words in the budget. We want to see things start happening to address the debt and jobs crisis.

Let me tell you why I'm concerned. You look: the deficit is up, not down, and it is going to stay above $10 billion for years. This finance minister will have produced six consecutive budgets with $10 billion-or-higher deficits—that's a hall of fame record of failure—and 14 out of 24 ministries all had increases in their budgets representing 82%—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Tim Hudak: This is not an austerity plan; it's not a jobs plan. Will you scrap it and actually adopt our ideas to get our economy growing again?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we have laid out a credible and solid plan. Let me share with the member what one former finance minister of Ontario had to say yesterday: "To get there, the government is making some tough but necessary choices." That's Janet Ecker, the president of the Toronto Financial Services Alliance.

These decisions are difficult. We have struck the right balance between creating jobs and balancing the budget. We set out a plan in 2010, Mr. Speaker, and each year we have beaten the deficit number we set out. The deficit will continue to go down. It's still too high. That's why we made the choices we did yesterday: to ensure we continue on that path, and I look forward to making the investments in new jobs that will help this province grow even faster, Mr. Speaker, in the future.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. As the Premier knows, everyday people across Ontario are going to be looking very closely at this budget, and one of their likely concerns is going to be whether they and their loved ones are going to have good jobs. Before the election the Premier insisted that corporate tax

giveaways and the HST would create 600,000 jobs in Ontario. Today we have 600,000 people in this province looking for work. Is the Premier ready to admit that there's much, much more to do?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, there's always—always—more to do, and I commend my honourable colleague for the reflective outlook that she's brought with respect to the budget. I think nothing is ever lost and much can be gained by being reflective.

I say to my honourable colleague—I would remind her—that since the recession, Ontario has created over 300,000 jobs. Last year alone, we created 121,000 jobs. Since the recession, I say again, Ontario has created as many jobs as the other nine provinces combined.

Mr. Paul Miller: Twelve dollars an hour.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I say again to my honourable colleague who interjects that the facts are, Speaker, that the overwhelming majority of those jobs are full-time jobs, and they pay above the average industrial wage. We need to understand that in terms of the evolution of the Ontario economy.

I say as well, Speaker, to my honourable colleagues that we have in the budget a number of measures designed to create new jobs, including a $35-billion—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, as the Premier well knows, I don't think corporate tax giveaways are the ticket to creating jobs. If they were, the 275,000 people without work in Toronto, the 23,000 people in London and the 4,000 people in Thunder Bay would have more jobs than they know what to do with.

During the campaign and the lead-up to the budget, we proposed tax measures that would reward the job creators, Speaker, as an alternative to the no-strings-attached giveaways that reward companies even when they ship jobs away. The Premier knows, and he admits now, that corporate tax giveaways are not creating jobs. Why has he ignored my realistic plans to reward the job creators?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, again, I appreciate the question. I would call to my honourable colleague's attention the fact that today, under the existing tax environment, our regulatory regime, Toyota announced they're going to invest in 400 new jobs in Ontario. I would think that my honourable colleague would be open to our new jobs and prosperity fund, Speaker, which will enable all of us to have input in the best way for us to deploy over $2 billion in job support programs. They have worked very effectively in the past. I think we can do more to sharpen them for our circumstances as we find them today.

The fact of the matter is, Speaker, our economy continues to grow. We continue to create more jobs in Ontario than they do in the rest of the country. We're feeling very optimistic about our future. Reports are coming in from non-partisan parties who are saying that our budget is getting it right: protecting health care, protecting education and growing the economy.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, for people looking for a job, this budget contains some stark news. Cancelling construction of hospitals and universities will cost hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs, and scrapping Ontario Northland means thousands and thousands of fewer jobs and less opportunity in places like the Ring of Fire.

People worried about jobs don't have to look hard at the budget to see the bad news, Speaker. Is the Premier ready to consider some measures that would actually give them some hope?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I think it's important that my honourable colleague and all of us in this House understand a little bit more about the job-creating measures that we have in place as part of this budget. We've been talking about the new jobs and prosperity fund—some $2 billion-plus there, Speaker.

Simply by investing in the new hospitals and hospital projects that we have committed to and are maintaining in place, Speaker, that alone creates 79,000 new Ontario jobs. Our all-day, two-way GO train service will create 68,000 new jobs, Speaker. Our green energy plan continues to create thousands and thousands of new jobs in Ontario.

I talked a moment ago, Speaker, about our Pan Am athletes' village. That is over 5,000 new jobs. By continuing to protect our schools and smaller classes and full-day kindergarten, that protects 20,000 jobs. Those are not meaningless numbers, Speaker. They're very meaningful to the families involved.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Patients and families are worried about a budget that doesn't deliver much positive change in a health care system that leaves families waiting longer. A simple first step we proposed was a hard cap on CEO compensation to free up money for front-line care.

My question is a pretty basic one: Why didn't the Premier take that advice, Speaker?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we did in fact take the advice, and I've indicated this morning that I would welcome further advice from the leader of the third party in this matter.

There are real challenges associated with the implementation of her ideas. For instance, you have large research hospitals, say Sick Kids Hospital—should we have compensation levels for the CEO of that hospital the same as a small rural hospital, for instance? That's one of the challenges with a hard cap. There are a variety of other challenges. There are issues of contracts entered into by independent boards.

But I do welcome further suggestions that the third party may have with respect to implementing their ideas, and we undertake to work with them on that issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, large-scale hospitals of this nature in other jurisdictions are paying their CEOs a fraction of what this government is paying our CEOs.

Everyday folks in Ontario, everyday people, hit with this budget are going to see that nurses who are struggling to keep their patients happy, people who are trying to make it on a minimum wage, people who are on social assistance—all of these folks are going to be hit really, really hard with a hard cap on their salaries, but CEOs earning $700,000 are not going to have a hard cap at all. It raises some serious questions, Speaker, about how this budget is actually going to work and whether it's going to work for them.

Earlier, the Premier said that there was a goal of moving people out of hospitals into home care. In the budget, we don't see that happening. We don't see the wait-lists being reduced. Why didn't the Premier take our advice on getting those wait-lists—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, this budget continues for four years the cap on compensation for executives. I remind the leader of the third party that we now will benchmark against other Canadian health care institutions, which I think is an important step forward. We will require boards to have much more rigorous structures in place to measure productivity, to measure improvement.

I'd also remind the leader of the third party that we are open to hearing further suggestions. A hard cap is problematic in a number of ways. One of them is what I mentioned a moment ago, Mr. Speaker, but I think it's an idea worth pursuing more, and I undertake to work with the third party to try and improve on what we put forward in our budget yesterday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, if we're going to build a sustainable health care system that really works for people, cuts alone are not going to work. We can't cut our way out of long waiting lists. We cannot have changes that make home care work by cutting.

In the lead-up to the budget, we told the government that it was time to end the inefficient and ineffective mess that we have in our home care system and actually start building the kind of system that ensures the money is spent on care for the people who need it. Is this Premier ready to consider changes like these?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: First of all, Mr. Speaker, I remind the member opposite that in fact we are increasing home care funding by 4%. It's one of the largest increases in the budget; overall health funding by 2.1%.

Here's what Doris Grinspun, the CEO of the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario, had to say: "On the health care front there is ... good news; it's going to increase funding for home care services and improve access to primary care, which is urgent."

Here's what Mark Rochon, the interim president of the Ontario Hospital Association, said. "The government has very clearly signalled that it has rejected harmful, across-the-board cuts to health care funding, and that it intends to move forward quickly and responsibly with implementing its action plan for health care—a plan that Ontario's hospitals fully support."

There are a number of important choices we've made in the budget, and one of them is to in fact increase funding for home care. I look forward to working with the leader of the third party on the issue of compensation for executives. I know that's an important issue for her and her party.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Your budget shows that you still just don't get it, Minister. It shows that this government continues to back away from making the right decisions. You have not taken any decisive measures to rein in your spending, to cut the size, to cut the cost of government. A legislated wage freeze for all government salaries would have done exactly that. Even your union buddies are saying that they at least know where they stand with my party. Instead, this budget doubles down on the same failed approach this government tried two years ago.

Minister, will this budget bill include a legislated wage freeze for the next two years? Yes or no?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I'd refer the member opposite to both the budget speech and the budget documents. There's a very detailed narrative on our obligations, first, in collective bargaining that are imposed by the Supreme Court of Canada and others. So our intention is to move forward and achieve all the targets we have laid out, the fiscal targets in our plan, in a responsible way.

There is one big difference between this party and that party: We have enormous respect for our teachers, our nurses, our front-line public servants. You will not ever hear this party refer to nurses as hula hoop workers. That party wants to lay off 10,000 people in the education sector; we are working to protect those jobs through the investments we've made today.

This budget has been well received across the board. It's the right plan for a strong future for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'd like to quote from the very same DBRS report quoted by the Premier just a few moments ago: "The plan continues to rely on some bold assumptions, especially with respect to future growth in public sector compensation.... In DBRS's view, this entails considerable implementation risk and is expected to test the resolve of the government."

Speaker, this government has no resolve. This government has consistently refused to stand up to the unions, and we all know why. As a result, government spending is going up by nearly $2 billion in this budget. This government has also failed to reduce the deficit. How many failed budgets will you present before you implement a two-year legislated wage freeze?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the member uses language that hearkens back to a day gone by, a day that was clearly rejected by the people of Ontario.

We are moving decisively on compensation. We're moving decisively on pensions, in ways that no other government has. We're doing so working with our partners in the public and broader public sectors. Working together, we can build a strong future for this province, building on our achievements to date. We are proud that class sizes are smaller today, that test scores are improving, that graduation rates are higher.

We're going to move forward, working with all of our partners in the broader public sector with respect and understanding for the important role they play in our schools and in our society.

1100

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Millions of dollars were pocketed by well-connected insiders at Ornge. Despite all the warning signs, your Minister of Health didn't raise one ounce of concern.

The Premier has embarked on one of the most vicious slash-and-burn budgets we've ever seen in this province. Here's an idea for him: That minister didn't do her job. Why are you letting her keep it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased to inform the member that this morning the public accounts committee began its hearings into Ornge, including an in-camera session with the Auditor General.

This afternoon, the Minister of Health will have an opportunity to appear in front of the committee and discuss the actions that she took, leading up to the calling in of the police and of forensic auditors before that; replacing the board and CEO; a new performance agreement; and tough new legislation which will also, if it's passed in second reading, have an opportunity to be examined by a committee of this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, there will be ample opportunity in the coming weeks—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I'm going to try to reinforce this. It's not helpful when members on the government side say things to provoke, just as much as the other side should not be making some heckling noises when someone's trying to answer, and it went both ways over the last two questions. So I'm asking you all: Bring it down and stop instigating each other, so that we can get questions and answers in this House.

Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: For the past few months, families have been reading stories on the front pages of their newspapers about well-connected insiders making millions of dollars at Ornge, paying themselves huge salaries with luxurious perks, and using health care dollars to hire a legal team, led by the president of the Liberal Party of Canada, to hide Ornge from the public.

Yesterday's budget made the same claims about getting tough on CEO salaries as it did two years ago. How can the Premier expect anyone to believe him now?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the committee will have the opportunity to discuss the actions that the minister has taken, including new measures to make sure that there's proper oversight of Ornge. But also, the committee will have the opportunity to talk about what information was forthcoming not only to this side of the House but to that side of the House.

I think all of us look forward to an explanation from the leader of the New Democratic Party, who received a letter—a detailed briefing note—in December 2010 on all aspects of Ornge, including those that have caused so much controversy. I'm hoping that the public accounts committee will have an opportunity to discuss why she did not take action, she did not raise questions in this Legislature, she did not approach the Minister of Health and she did not raise the concerns.

Mr. Speaker, for weeks we have heard concern from the NDP about material that was provided to the Minister of Health. I find it passing strange—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

POVERTY

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I'm proud of our government's commitment to reduce poverty in Ontario and the progress we've made together, but we must continue to do more. Especially during tough economic times, we must ensure that the most vulnerable, like low-income families and children, are protected.

In his report, Don Drummond recommended that the Ontario child benefit be frozen and not have any further increases. I ask the minister: Explain why the government did not follow Mr. Drummond's recommendations on the Ontario child benefit, and will he please reaffirm the government's commitment to fulfill its poverty reduction strategy?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to start by thanking the member from Scarborough–Rouge River for this important question.

I am very proud that this government introduced the Ontario child benefit. It's one of the cornerstones of our ambitious poverty reduction strategy. Mr. Speaker, you yourself will recall that the benefit began with a payment of up to $250 per child in 2007. The next year, in 2008, that was increased to $600 per child. In 2009, the government again increased this benefit, this time to $1,100—two years ahead of schedule—and now benefitting more than one million children and their families.

Despite one of the worst economic downturns in a generation, the Ontario child benefit and other anti-poverty measures have already helped to lift 20,000 children and their families out of poverty. That's why we will

increase the Ontario child benefit to $1,210 by July 2013, and again, the following year, to $1,310 by July 2014.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Minister. I am pleased that we remain committed to reducing poverty, but I am concerned about some of our province's most vulnerable—those who rely on social assistance to help them get through a tough time.

After social assistance recipients had their benefits slashed by 22% under the Mike Harris Conservative government, many of Ontario's most vulnerable were left languishing in poverty. During tight economic times, it has become increasingly important to ensure that those on social assistance have the opportunities available to them in order to get back on their feet.

Could you outline the steps this government has taken to support those in need?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the member raised a very important question, and I want to stress what I had a chance to say yesterday, and that is that in this budget, there is very little room in terms of modest increases for programming, but we've designated three areas: health care and education, but also, just as important, social services. We will not balance the budget on the backs of the most vulnerable. We saw what happened when the Conservatives were in power, with a 22% decrease in social assistance rates.

The resources that are outlined in the budget will help build upon the measures that we've taken to improve and strengthen social assistance and, perhaps, most importantly, it will help with the social assistance review which is being undertaken right now by Frances Lankin and Munir Sheik—one of the most comprehensive reviews of social assistance in decades in the province of Ontario. We look forward to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. For the last number of days, the government House leader has been dispatched to revise the facts about what the opposition did and when to warn the Minister of Health about the scandal at Ornge.

I want to set the record straight. On the 5th, the 13th and the 21st of April 2011, I warned the minister here in this chamber that tax dollars were being siphoned out of this minister's $150-million annual flow of funds to Ornge into for-profit companies. On April 27th, I received this 13-page letter from Ornge that threatened me with legal action for raising those concerns in this House. It was a patent attempt at litigation chill to silence me.

I then met with the auditor to convey to him my concerns. In September, the auditor tabled a draft report. It was nine months from the time that concerns were first raised in this House until the Minister of Health took action. Is that the Premier's definition—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, the public accounts committee began its hearings this morning. Over the next couple of weeks, it's going to have ample opportunities to discuss knowledge on both side of the House, because what's very interesting is that the honourable member has forgotten to tell the House about another letter that was received by their caucus, one that was received by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Hudak, on April 27. I'm sending it over right now with a page.

I'd like to quote in part from that letter. The letter tells us that not only was the member of Whitby-Ajax briefed back in early 2011, but so were four other members of the Ontario PC caucus and members of the Ontario PC research office.

I'd like to quote from the letter: "To date, we have had the privilege to provide an overview of our operation to Mr. Norm Miller"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

1110

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, the government House leader makes my point precisely. There was a great deal of information about the goings-on at Ornge that this government and this minister did nothing about. We are talking here about a minister who received very precise briefings on what was going on there.

The Auditor General said it stunk to high heaven. He could smell it. Why couldn't the Minister of Health take one step to stopping what was going on under her watch to waste millions of tax dollars and put patients at risk?

I want to hear from the Premier. How can he justify keeping this minister in her place under that kind of irresponsible behaviour?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The member wants to talk about detailed briefings—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will begin to name members if they do not stop. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the member asks about detailed briefings, and yet he forgot to tell this House about the detailed briefing for the member from Whitby-Ajax, and the only thing she did was pose for some snazzy photo to go in her householder.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from the letter, a letter which I hope will have some attention at public accounts. I quote: "To date, we have had the privilege to provide an overview of our operation to Mr. Norm Miller, Mr. Jerry

Ouellette, Ms. Christine Elliott, Ms. Sylvia Jones, Mr. Garfield Dunlop and members of your research staff."

I look forward to discussion at public accounts about this letter and the detailed briefings that were held by the PC Party, briefings that resulted in—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE

M^me^ France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la Premier ministre, s'il vous plait. Mr. Drummond recommended capping health care spending at 2.5%. That in itself would have made it very difficult to ensure that health care services are there when people need them, but yesterday's budget went even further than what Drummond recommended. It is capping funding at 2.1%.

How can the Premier be so confident that his plan, his budget, won't hurt health care for families who need this?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to be able to speak about initiatives in the budget that completely reflect our determination to transform health care in this province. I am delighted that we will see increased spending in health in coming years, and we have been very, very strategic about how we are spending the additional funds that we have in health care.

Our action plan outlines the transformation that is now under way in Ontario's health care system. We are determined to improve patient care by providing the right care at the right time in the right place. We know that our health care system would benefit from more investment in the community and home care sector, and that is exactly what this budget will permit us to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^me^ France Gélinas: Back to the Premier: New Democrats agree that investment needs to be made in community care. But for the residents of 34 communities in northern Ontario, their little community hospital is it. So when the Premier says that the budget is protecting health care services, does he include northern Ontario in that statement?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Oh, absolutely, Speaker. In fact, I think that an objective observer would say that northern Ontario has benefited enormously from our focus on health care. In fact, we've created a new medical school in the north with the explicit goal of training people in the north, training people from the north so they will practise in the north.

We are seeing improved numbers when it comes to care in the north, and we will continue to focus on those parts of the province where we still have work to do to ensure that all of us have access to excellent health care.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

Yesterday our government released its budget, entitled Strong Action for Ontario. Throughout his speech, the Minister of Finance made it clear that the most critical thing Ontario can do to create jobs and to spur economic growth is to eliminate the deficit and bring the provincial budget back to balance. Can the Minister of Economic Development please explain how this Strong Action for Ontario will spur job growth and prosperity for Ontario families?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member is absolutely right: The best thing we can do, and I think economists agree on this, to strengthen our economy is to eliminate the deficit. Strong Action for Ontario is our five-year plan to bring the province back to balance by 2017-18.

You know, Mr. Speaker, our efforts to build a globally competitive tax environment, our efforts to make Ontario's workforce one of the best educated and trained anywhere, and our efforts to invest in a strong, competitive infrastructure system have helped Ontario create over 300,000 full-time jobs since the global recession. This budget builds on those efforts. In fact, over 170,000 jobs will be created or retained through the measures contained in this budget.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Premier was right this morning: There is more work to do. The creation of the new jobs and prosperity council will help strengthen our partnership with business and help us ensure that we improve productivity across this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for this wonderful information about job creation in our province of Ontario. Strong Action for Ontario is just what the province needs in order to return to balance and eliminate the deficit while still creating jobs.

The minister mentioned the proposed new jobs and prosperity fund. However, before the budget, we were debating the Attracting Investment and Creating Jobs Act and the eastern and proposed southwest development funds. Can the minister clarify: Will these important regional economic development funds also be consolidated into the new jobs and prosperity fund?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This government recognizes that certain regions in the province were hit harder by the recession than others. That's why we're so supportive of the southwest Ontario development fund and the eastern Ontario development fund. I can assure the member, Mr. Speaker, that our intention will be to ensure that these funds do indeed remain distinct, to create jobs in southwestern and eastern Ontario.

Speaker, while the PC leader appears to be eager to cause an election by not supporting the budget, I think his own members in his own caucus from southwestern Ontario and eastern Ontario would be very uncomfortable campaigning with a party and a leader that's opposing jobs in southwestern Ontario and opposing jobs in eastern Ontario.

Ontario families who care about jobs support our proposed regional economic development funds, and I believe, Mr. Speaker, they'll also support our budget for the very same reasons.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question's for the Minister of Health. Minister, I have to tell you that I'm quite shocked with the responses we're getting today. I listened with great interest to the questions raised by my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora, and also to the answers from the House leader. I think, as you know, although my colleague, back as early as last April, didn't get the attention of you and your government, he certainly did get Ornge's attention, and Ornge responded by sending the member and CTV Toronto a letter threatening litigation. The letter, by the way, was written by Liberal Party president Alf Apps. It was an attempt to silence the opposition, to silence the media through intimidation and threats.

I ask you: Do you endorse that culture of intimidation that was created by Ornge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The answer to that question is, "Absolutely not," and that is why I have taken the action that I have taken, Speaker, to completely change the leadership at Ornge.

The auditor raised very serious issues. As soon as I became aware of those issues, I acted. Within weeks of learning about the findings of the Auditor General—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The shouting has returned, and I have about three members in mind that I would like to ask them to think about it.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Within weeks of learning, we had new leadership in place. We have a new performance agreement. I've introduced legislation. The auditor supports the progress we have made.

Speaker, I look forward to attending public accounts this afternoon, where I trust that members will take the time to actually understand what happened there.

My focus is on implementing the changes that are in this budget: positive changes, changes that will improve health care and protect the sustainability—

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Back to the minister: I didn't hear a response to my question: Do you support the culture of intimidation created by the management at Ornge? I think the reason why is because we're also seeing a culture of intimidation in here. We see the tactics that are being used now in response to questions, and you're trying to create the same political chill for the opposition, as the House leader cites letters and briefings that were provided to others, indicating that we should have acted. We did act, and this is a very disgraceful attempt to give cover to a weak health minister.

I ask you today: Are you prepared to do the honourable thing and resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I am very excited about the opportunities that are in this budget. I must say, I'm just a bit surprised that the opposition, the day after the budget, is not focusing on elements of what is in fact a very important and very transformative budget.

When it comes to health care, I know that we can get better value for the money that we're spending in our health care system. I know we can provide better patient care in a more cost-effective manner, because we're going to be focusing on the patient. We're going to be focusing on the needs of the individuals who rely on our health care system when they are ill.

I am excited about the possibilities. I'm excited about the transformation. I'm excited about our focus on seniors in the budget. We will be strengthening supports for seniors, providing house calls, providing more care at home, and I wish the opposition was as excited as I am.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you. New question.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Mr. Michael Mantha: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Yesterday's budget confirmed that families in northern Ontario will not only lose transportation services they rely on, but 1,000 will lose their jobs as a result. It also ignores proposals to create jobs in northern Ontario, like rewarding companies that create jobs, making sure resources are mined in Ontario and processed here in Ontario, and investing in infrastructure in the Ring of Fire. Why did the Premier's budget ignore constructive proposals to create jobs in northern Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The question is an important question. I'm sure the member from Algoma–Manitoulin missed the section on the Ring of Fire, the greatest opportunity to ensure that we bring economic opportunity and wealth to northern Ontario. We're committed to the Ring of Fire.

We're also committed to the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp., and unlike the NDP when they were in government and they cut the northern Ontario heritage fund by $60 million to put in general reserves, we are ensuring that the northern Ontario heritage fund is protected to the tune of $100 million.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: The Premier's misguided plan to close down Ontario Northland destroyed a way to provide infrastructure needed to develop the Ring of Fire. Northerners were shocked that the Premier would close down Ontario Northland but were at least hoping for a plan for job creation in the north. But there was none.

Is the Premier ready to consider some measures that would give families in northern Ontario some hope?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: There's absolutely no question. Over our eight years, we will compare our record with their record when they were in power and with the

official opposition's record when they were in power. We have shown a commitment to northern Ontario greater than any other government in the past. We will continue that commitment, because it is very, very important.

We are committed to ensuring that the potential of the Ring of Fire is realized, we are committed to investing in infrastructure across northern Ontario—that is very, very important—and we are committed, Speaker, to ensuring that we have a modern transportation system in northern Ontario that meets the present and future demands of the economy of northern Ontario, which looks very, very bright for the future.

EDUCATION

Mr. Michael Coteau: Mr. Speaker, my question, through you, is for the Minister of Education. The government tabled its budget for the upcoming year on Tuesday, and I know there were some tough choices to be made. Ontario weathered the worst economic recession many of us have ever seen better than most jurisdictions, but as the economy continues to recover, the government has to take serious steps to bring the budget back to balance.

Will the minister please tell this House how she will protect education in Ontario in the face of these tough choices?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I thank the member for Don Valley East for the question and for his advocacy on education.

Let me be very clear, Speaker: The commitment of this government to a strong, publicly funded education system will never waver. This commitment, coupled with the dedication of our partners in education, has brought us real results. We've brought test scores up. Our grad rates are up. We've restored public confidence in our schools after years of neglect in the previous Conservative government. Our work in education, together, has brought us recognition across Canada and around the world as a leader in educational excellence.

In spite of challenging economic times, we will protect the gains that we've made in education. That's why we are protecting the classroom experience for Ontario kids.

Members opposite, when they had an opportunity, chose a different path that put our students at risk—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the minister for her response.

My constituents in Don Valley East understand how important good schools are. We currently have 22 full-day kindergartens in Don Valley East, and recent research shows that all-day kindergarten gives kids a great start to education. In addition to that, it saves parents thousands of dollars each year in child care costs. But I know there are some parents in my riding who are concerned about education funding.

Will this minister tell this House how she will protect the classroom experience for kids in Don Valley East and across this great province?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to stand in the House and say this. To protect the gains Ontario has made in education, including full-day kindergarten, smaller class sizes and more classroom teachers, we will look to other areas. We will look to board amalgamations to find efficiencies in bringing low-enrolment boards together. We're also finding savings all outside of the classroom by reducing the EQAO budget.

Speaker, I believe that it's so important to make sure that the taxpayers' dollars go to where they're needed most, and that is in our classrooms. Education is the best investment that we can make to the future prosperity of this province, and we make that investment in classrooms across the province every single day.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Premier. Ornge created a culture of intimidation for anyone who wanted to blow the whistle on what was going on there. It started with letters to former employees, threatening to sue them if they talked. Then the member for Newmarket–Aurora got a letter from Ornge threatening to sue him for the questions he asked in this House—his duly appointed job. Then Paul Bliss and CTV got a letter from Ornge, threatening to sue them for an exposé it ran just prior to the election. Then Ron McKerlie, your hand-picked and newly installed CEO, threatened staff with jail time if they talked.

What made you think that the way to fix the culture of intimidation and litigation chill is more intimidation and litigation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I think all members should welcome the opportunity at the public accounts committee today to hear from the Minister of Health first-hand the actions that she took when she learned about the wrongdoing at Ornge.

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At the same time, there has been so much discussion about letters and briefings. I also think it's going to be an excellent opportunity for us to talk about what members of the honourable member's party knew in terms of Ornge. Again, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very worthwhile taking a look at the letter that was sent to the leader of that party which outlined briefings that were held by a number of members—and I must correct the record, Mr. Speaker. I said Whitby-Ajax earlier; I meant the member from Whitby–Oshawa.

But again, let me quote: "To date, we've had the privilege to provide an overview of our operation to Mr. Norm Miller, Mr. Jerry Ouellette, Ms. Christine Elliott, Ms. Sylvia Jones"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: To the Premier again: I guess I'll be probably be getting a letter later today now that I've asked a question. The culture of intimidation and use of litigation chill as a tactic to silence critics comes from the top. One doesn't have to look much further than the tactics of the Liberal House leader and the Premier—although I'm getting confused which is which here when I ask a question. They've tried to create a political chill for the opposition by citing letters and briefings Ornge provided to others. It is a disgraceful attempt to give cover to a weak health minister. It sends a signal to the front-line staff that the Liberals will stop at nothing to try to bury the Ornge file.

Why not do the right, the honourable thing? Cut out the chill tactics, let front-line staff speak freely, and fire a weak and incompetent health minister.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, my mother used to say, "They can dish it out, but they can't take it."

For weeks, we've had to hear from the opposition about how the minister received this briefing, the minister received that letter. And yet, when we stand up legitimately and say that we want public accounts to get to the bottom of what happened over there in terms of letters and briefings, we're somehow offending them.

Mr. Speaker, the honourable—

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe the member from Whitby–Oshawa was that intimidated when she posed for that snazzy photo at a press conference with Ornge to talk about her success in getting a base in her riding, instead of coming to the police or the Minister of Health with the information that she had received.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is for the Premier. Premier, you will know that the community of Fort Albany is in a state of emergency in regard to the rising of the Albany River. One of the problems that happens to be going on right now is that they need your help. The main community itself is on St. Clair Island, and across from St. Clair Island on the mainland is where the airport and the northern store are. The problem is, there's not enough fuel to fly the food to and from St. Clair Island so that the residents there are able to have something to eat.

I'm asking you directly: Will Emergency Measures Ontario today communicate with Chief Solomon in Fort Albany in order to arrange to get fuel to the community so that we can fly people to and from St. Clair Island so that they have enough food to eat while they're waiting to see what happens with the river?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This is a very important question. First of all, let me say thank you to all the people from EMO, from northern services, from First Nations who work diligently all weekend and 24 hours a day to help these people in the community .

My ministry is working very closely with the people from Fort Albany to make sure that everybody is safe there; everybody has what they need. They are also working in co-operation with DND, with the federal government, to provide all the necessary stuff that they need, including food, including transportation for medical reasons, and to be on standby to make sure that if they need to be evacuated, we have communities that are there to welcome them—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, the community needs you to intervene. The federal government is dropping the ball, like usual. The absentee landlords of the First Nations, they are not acting on the requests from the community in order to fund the fuel that's needed in order to transport people to and from St. Clair Island so that they're able to eat. I understand that EMO has the authority and the power to do what needs to be done in order to make sure that the people of Fort Albany are able to get what they need so they can survive through this particular emergency.

I'm asking you directly today: Can you please have your staff contact the community of Fort Albany? Andrew Solomon's the chief; I can provide you with the phone number. They need help from you to put some pressure on the feds to get the fuel flowing to that community so that community members are able to put food in their fridges, food in their cupboards, and they can have what's necessary to survive through this emergency.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to praise the member from Timmins–James Bay for his concern about his community. He's always bringing to the House those very important matters.

I'll meet with you after question period. I know that they are in contact with the community, and I'll feed you on what we are doing and what we will be doing to make sure that this community is safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Eglinton–Lawrence on a point of order.

Mr. Mike Colle: I just want to remind members that everybody's invited to the children's choir from the Anatolian heritage community—the Turkish community. They want to have you come listen to their singing, view their food and their dialogue. Please drop by room 220.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. It's not a point of order, but I'm sure the members appreciated the reminder.

I have a reminder. I did hear it, and I had to digest it, so I will do this as a generic reminder. Even in quotes, it is the custom of this House to refer to every member either by their title, their ministry or their riding, and I would ask that you continue to do so.

This House has no deferred votes. We stand adjourned until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CAMBRIDGE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BUSINESS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Mr. Rob Leone: I stand here today to congratulate the winners of the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards that were held last Thursday. Much like the Ontario PC caucus, the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce recognizes that a strong and vibrant private sector is the key to a better quality of life for all of our citizens.

Each year, the chamber hosts the Business Excellence Awards in an effort to recognize the leaders of our business community and acknowledge their services. Over 60 businesses were nominated for last year's awards.

The winners of the Business Excellence Awards are businesses and individuals in my community who have demonstrated a significant and sustained commitment to positive business development, economic growth and diversity within our community.

The 2011 award winners are: Homewood Suites by Hilton; Pinebush Road Canadian Tire; Greg Durocher; Cambridge Mill; Gary Hauser, Hauser Law Office; Eva Vlasov, Argus Residence for Young People; Cliff Rego, the Re/Max Real Estate Centre; Linda Defoe from Cambridge Hotel and Conference Centre; Haley Bartlett; Tom LeBrun; Langs Farm Village; and Bennett Chevrolet Cadillac Buick president David Bennett.

Thank you to the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce for recognizing these organizations, and congratulations to the 2011 nominees and award winners. Thank you for the work that you do to grow the private sector in Cambridge and North Dumfries.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES

M^me^ France Gélinas: I wanted to talk about a report that was done by ICES that came out on March 6. It looked at different models of primary care in Ontario—more specifically, how we serve the most vulnerable population. What ICES did is they compared community health centres, family health teams and other models of primary care.

Some of the results: Community health centres served most of the population from lower-income neighbourhoods, populations that had a higher proportion of newcomers and those on social assistance; populations served by CHCs have more severe mental illness, more chronic health conditions and had higher morbidity and comorbidity, compared to the rest of the population of Ontario.

What else did they find? They found that patients that received their primary care at community health centres, both in urban and rural areas, used emergency departments way less than what we would have expected.

They also found that the same thing cannot be said for the other models of primary care, that family health organizations—and there's an alphabet of them—saw a model that received increased payments while failing to serve the needs of patients. They found that payments to physicians had almost doubled from $750 million a year to $1.6 billion a year, but that the people served use emergency departments more often than expected.

Hurray for community health centres, Mr. Speaker.

ANDREW SIGMARINGAM

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to rise in this House today and congratulate one of my constituents, Andrew Sigmaringam, who has been recognized as an Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year. The award recognizes youth ages six to 27 who are outstanding leaders and making a difference in their communities.

Andrew, who is only 17, was born deaf and received a cochlear implant as a toddler. He frequently speaks about his personal experiences to help and motivate other youth. For example, he spoke at the Hospital for Sick Children's annual cochlear implant program, where he was awarded with a Student Achievement Award. In addition, Andrew has worked with children with autism and has helped raise $5,000 for Free the Children, a charity that empowers youth to remove barriers that prevent them from being active local and global citizens.

Currently a student at Chaminade College School, Andrew will be attending Ryerson University's social work program this fall, where I'm sure he will continue to flourish.

Andrew Sigmaringam is an outstanding example of youth engagement and the importance of volunteer work. On behalf of the community of York South–Weston, I would like to congratulate and thank Andrew for his selfless work and devotion to helping others. Congratulations, Andrew.

ONTARIO LIBRARY ASSOCIATION AWARDS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to announce that one group and one individual in my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London have won awards at the recent annual Ontario Library Association conference held in Toronto.

Elgin county's library won the Minister's Award for Innovation. This award recognizes the library's radio show for children, Check it In, Check it Out, a partnership project with Mennonite Community Services that bridges the cultural, linguistic and economic barriers of Elgin county to bring the library, its resources programs and services to the Low-German-speaking Mennonite population of east Elgin. Congratulations to the staff and council of Elgin county, in particular the show's host and producer, Julie Berry.

The second award won was the W.J. Robertson medallion for Librarian of the Year, won by Middlesex public librarian Margaret Rule. The W.J. Robertson medallion is presented by the Ontario Library Boards' Association to a public librarian who has demonstrated

outstanding leadership in the advancement of public library services in Ontario. Margaret Rule has been a practising librarian for 41 years, and has been with the Middlesex County Library for 25 years. She's also been the CEO and county librarian for the past 20 years. Margaret has retired from Middlesex County Library. We thank her for her service and wish her well.

I'm very proud of our award winners from my riding.

HOME CARE

Ms. Cindy Forster: Today I had the pleasure to meet with Todd Beaudry, Christine Peacock, Ron Walker, Sue Hotte, Patrick Edwards and Aina Flack from Niagara and from my riding. They are with the Ontario Health Coalition. With yesterday's budget announcements on health care, they, like I, are concerned that seniors and families still will face a broken home care system with long wait-lists for care, and that aggressive cutbacks to health care funding will lead to more reductions in services, particularly in the Niagara region, where we have huge issues to start with.

The health budget, they believe, is lacking a detailed plan in home care to take the pressure off the hospitals in Niagara. The wait-lists continue to grow in my riding, and every day I get many calls from people whose loved ones are waiting for a bed. A 92-year-old woman named Nellie in my riding, who died recently, only needed help for half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening, but stayed in bed for 12 hours many days waiting for that care.

This is just not right, and this government needs to revert to a non-profit system and consult with front-line workers on the best way to deal with home care for our seniors and for patients in my riding and across this province.

OTTAWA MUSLIM ASSOCIATION

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm very pleased to be joined by my colleague Minister Chiarelli at Queen's Park today to congratulate the Ottawa Muslim Association on their 50th anniversary.

The Ottawa Muslim Association came into existence in 1962 and has been working hard within our community of Ottawa for the last 50 years. Many members of our community are exemplary leaders in all walks of life, serving not only the Muslim community but the larger Ottawa community as well.

One of their great achievements is a beautiful main mosque in Ottawa, located on Northwestern and Scott in my riding of Ottawa Centre. The mosque is very much in keeping with tradition in the use of copper on its rooftops and its dome, and it stands out beautifully.

1510

The Ottawa Muslim Association will be celebrating its anniversary at a dinner this Saturday. I'm very excited. I want to thank directors Naeem Malik, Mohammed Dayfallah, Tanveer Ahmed, Mashiur Rahman and the other board members; and the council of trustees, Nazih Hammoud, Ali Nawar, Mohammed Adi, Alia Ghadban, Ghassan Akrouche, Fayez Aboulchaar, Hazra Sheikh and Ahmed Osman; and the Ottawa Mosque Imam, Samy Metwally.

Thank you very much and congratulations to the Ottawa Muslim Association on their 50th anniversary.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: This statement is a direction to the Minister of the Environment. I hope he's listening.

Recently, the Globe and Mail covered a story on a topic I've been raising in this House since early 2010. In fact, I raised this issue in question period, in petitions, in member's statements and in direct discussions with ministry staff and the minister himself. I'm talking about commercial fill. This is the moving of soil from a construction site to an abandoned pit.

Let me use the words Mayor Chuck Mercier from the township of Scugog in my riding said recently in the Toronto Star: "Dig a hole in Toronto and they get development charges and property-tax revenue. And what do we get … here? A pile of dirt." I might add that it might be contaminated dirt.

We understand the need for soil remediation. However, we need regulations and guidelines. It's been almost one year since I asked the minister, and he promised to have guidelines for the industry as well as setting standards on issuing permits, managing the movement, testing the soil and managing the nuisance in the process. What's worst of all is that no one has been consulted on this process, to my knowledge.

Minister, I call on you to take immediate action to provide guidelines to regulate the management, movement and transportation of commercial fill and the potential contamination of our water sources. You've had enough time. The aggregate resource review is going to go on. I urge you to bring up the issue of managing commercial fill; otherwise, you can potentially contaminate the aquifers in the province of Ontario.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Speaker, our government is making thoughtful choices to build a better tomorrow for Ontario families. Right now, the single most important step the government can take to grow the economy is to balance the budget, to make the economy stronger and better able to create jobs while keeping education and health care strong.

Our government is taking strong action for Ontario through the 2012 budget. This is serious action for a serious time and puts Ontario on track to eliminate the deficit by 2017-18 by maintaining a low rate of growth in spending, and beating deficit targets laid out in the 2010 and 2011 budgets.

But we will continue to focus our priorities on further strengthening the economy and spurring job creation. We

will build on our investments to create a sustainable and high-quality health care system. We will build on our plan to have the world's best-educated workforce.

The Conservatives would choose to continue a $345-million subsidy to horse racing while shutting down full-day kindergarten. When asked to choose between horse racing and protecting the results we've achieved in our public services, we will choose protecting education and health care every single time, and we will continue to make thoughtful choices that support the goals, needs and aspirations of Ontario families.

This is about taking strong action when strong action is required.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yesterday was a tough day for Huron–Bruce after the budget was officially unveiled.

Last year, on August 19 in Wingham and on August 26 in Kincardine, mere weeks before Ontarians in Huron–Bruce went to the polls, my predecessor, on behalf of the McGuinty Liberal government, shared an empty promise with both communities and announced funding for the long-awaited expansion of the Wingham and Kincardine hospitals. Yesterday, the rug was pulled out from under these projects, leaving these communities behind who were misled and lied to by this government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I withdraw.

These were clearly pre-budget ploys to swing voter favour to the side of the Liberal government. My predecessor said to the media that these projects would be cancelled if the Liberals lost the election. How ironic is that?

Why did the Liberal government choose to play give and take with the executive, staff, volunteers, fundraisers and patients at these hospitals when they knew there was no money left in the provincial coffers to fund these projects?

This government needs to come clean to the people of Huron–Bruce and recognize that the promised hospital funding was nothing but a seat saver that did not work, and explain why they broke their promise to the good people of Wingham and Kincardine.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Essex on a point of order.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: On a point of order: Mr. Speaker, I know that you frown upon this type of behaviour, but I believe I was inadvertently missed during the introduction of guests. I wanted to introduce two members in the gallery here today: Bruce Allen, who is the vice-president of CAW Local 199 in St. Catharines, and Audrey Longley, who is an injured worker and an injured worker activist. They are here visiting us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member. He does know that it is not a point of order, but we welcome our guests today. We're glad they're here.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr3, An Act respecting Master's College and Seminary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted. Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that yesterday the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated March 27, 2012, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT (STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS FOR HEALTH CARE AND EDUCATION), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE (COMITÉ PERMANENT DES COMPTES PUBLICS SUR LES SOINS DE SANTÉ ET L'ÉDUCATION)

Mr. Ouellette moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act to establish the Standing Committee on Public Accounts for Health Care and Education / Projet de loi 56, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative pour créer le Comité permanent des comptes publics sur les soins de santé et l'éducation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: With the health care and education budgets being well in excess of 62% of the provincial budget, it's important that we give the Auditor General the ability to review those particular ministries to ensure that they're being spent in the best interests of the populace of the province of Ontario.

PETITIONS

UTILITY CHARGES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents. This group here were supplied to me by Dale Gibbons, a well-respected person from Port Perry. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Premier and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas section 398(2) of the Municipal Act, 2001 (the 'act'), allows a municipality to add public utility arrears incurred by a tenant to the municipal tax bill of the owner; and

"Whereas Ontario regulation 581/06 permits such arrears to have priority lien status under the act; and

"Whereas these provisions reversed the long-standing law in this area that held that a landlord was not responsible for utility charges where the landlord was not the consumer; and

"Whereas landlords may now be burdened unfairly, and potentially catastrophically, with fees and charges they have no control over; and

"Whereas these provisions will also impact tenants who are not in arrears with their utility payments but who will now face rent increases and/or increases in utility payments where such payments are pooled as landlords attempt to recoup these outstanding liabilities; and

"Whereas a number of municipalities, including Penetanguishene and Bracebridge, Niagara Falls" and others, "have reversed such policies as a result of the demonstrated and unprecedented negative impacts on landlords and tenants; and

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"Whereas municipalities and utility providers in Ontario already have at their disposal a number of means by which they can control or collect outstanding arrears, including by requiring deposits for the utility service pursuant to the Public Utilities Act and by seizing personal property in the possession of the ratepayer;

"Now therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Repeal section 398(2) of the Municipal Act, 2001, and amend Ontario regulation 581/06 accordingly, to ensure that property owners are not responsible for the payment of outstanding utility arrears where they are not the consumer."

I'm pleased to sign, support this and present this to Liam, one of the pages here.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the proposed move of the current Temiskaming Shores ServiceOntario site to the Haileybury land titles office will result in less access to people with disabilities because of the topography and building characteristics of the site; and

"Whereas this move will separate ServiceOntario from Service Canada, who currently share offices and provide a one-stop location access point for residents; and

"Whereas service will be reduced if the offices are split; and

"Whereas both buildings are owned by the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas space is available in the current building if needed;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Government Services be immediately directed to reverse its decision to move the ServiceOntario site in Temiskaming Shores from its current location."

I wholeheartedly agree and would like to sign this petition and give it to page Abbigail.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am pleased to present a petition to this Legislature signed by 3,542 people from my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I want to commend June Anderson and her committee for getting these signatures to support the continuance of interim long-term-care beds at the Marguerite Centre. It's a short petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Champlain Local Health Integration Network," otherwise known as the LHIN, "has developed an integrated health service plan for Renfrew county that will not improve residents' health, does not take into consideration the chronic doctor shortage in rural Ontario and fails to put the needs of patients first; and

"Whereas the decision to remove long-term-care beds from the Marguerite Centre in Pembroke will result in hardship for seniors;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Direct the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to order the Champlain LHIN to reinstate the 30 long-term-care beds at the Marguerite Centre in Pembroke, Ontario."

I sign this petition and send it down with Kyle.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas global climate change is the most serious threat facing humanity and poses significant risks to our environment, economy, society and human health; and

"More than 97% of scientists working in the disciplines contributing to studies of our climate and all national science academies accept that climate change is almost certainly being caused by human activities mainly due to the use of fossil fuels; and

"The objective of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is 'stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system'; and

"Climate scientists are now warning us that limiting global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees centigrade is essential; and

"Ontario has a clear responsibility to reduce our emissions given that our per capita greenhouse gas emissions are among the highest in the world; and

"With the introduction of the Green Energy Act and feed-in tariff program, Ontario is an example to the rest of the world of the principle of renewable energy development; and

"The best research today indicates that energy demands are decreasing and that sufficient potential energy from a diverse supply of renewable sources exists to meet Ontario's current and projected energy demands;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Immediately prepare a plan that requires that 100% of Ontario's stationary energy be from zero-carbon sources before the end of 2023, with a timeline to be audited annually by the Auditor General and published reports."

I'm going to sign this and give this to Aylin to be delivered.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the closure of the Bluewater Youth Centre will have a negative economic impact on Goderich and the surrounding area; and

"Whereas there is a need to deal with overcrowding in the Ontario correctional system; and

"Whereas the federal Bill C-10, Safe Streets and Communities Act, will increase the population in the Ontario correctional system over the next four years; and

"Whereas the Bluewater Youth Centre would need very little retrofitting and the staff would need minimal retraining to open as a medium-secure correctional facility which could hold more than 200 beds required by the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services; and

"Whereas specialized treatment programs within the correctional system such as drug treatment, mental health issues, could be offered with the skilled support staff currently in place; and

"Whereas we believe that this is the most economical way to add an additional 200 beds to the Ontario correctional system, as the building is in place and staff are currently hired to run such a facility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government engage in meaningful community and employee consultation in order to find alternate uses within the youth services or correctional services system for this facility, thereby preventing job losses and economic hardship for an area already badly impacted by plant closures and tornado damage."

I totally agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker, and I affix my signature.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of injured workers in Ontario. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the McGuinty government blocked workers over the age of 65 from receiving WSIB benefits if they are injured at work and exempted the WSIB from the legislation abolishing mandatory retirement age at 65;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to end these discriminatory measures."

I wholeheartedly agree, Mr. Speaker, will affix my name and submit it with Abbigail.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's Liberal government is forcing Ontario municipalities to build industrial wind turbines without any local say or local approval; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government transferred decision-making power from elected municipal governments to unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

"Whereas the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus has committed to restore local decision-making powers and to building renewable energy projects only in places where they are welcomed, wanted and at prices Ontario families can afford;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government restore local decision-making powers for renewable energy projects

and immediately stop forcing new industrial wind developments on municipalities that have not approved them and whose citizens do not want them in their community."

I agree with this and I shall sign it.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas on April 22, 2002, Premier Dalton McGuinty signed a pledge in North Bay to never privatize the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission; and

"Whereas high energy prices have forced northern Ontario businesses to close or move, including Xstrata, which had moved its Timmins smelter operations to Quebec and made up 10% of Ontario Northland railway's business; and

"Whereas some 60 lumber mills have closed across northern Ontario in recent years with a loss of 10,000 resource jobs, and Ontario fell from being the number one mining jurisdiction in the world to number 23 due to high taxes and government red tape, resulting in the erosion of Ontario Northland's commercial customer base; and

"Whereas the Far North Act that has banned development and turned much of northern Ontario into a virtual museum is the biggest barrier to new job creation in northern Ontario and cost Ontario Northland business; and

"Whereas the ONTC was completely omitted from the province's northern growth plan issued two years ago; and

"Whereas the former MPP for Nipissing staged an election campaign announcement on September 30, 2011 regarding what is now known to be a non-existent strategic alliance between the ONTC and Metrolinx; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario on March 23, 2012 announced it would wind down and divest itself of the ONTC and its assets with no prior consultation with community stakeholders in Nipissing and across northeastern Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, hereby demand Dalton McGuinty come to North Bay, look workers in the eye, and explain why he broke his word and has abandoned northern Ontario."

1530

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "Whereas Ontario taxpayers have been paying over millions in extra charges on their hydro bills to help retire the debt. The amount collected to date, as per the Auditor General's report, is $8.7 billion, but the amount owing was $7.8 billion;

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking, where is the money being invested?

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking why this was not addressed at the time the debt was paid;

"Whereas electrical rates have increased with the new creation of green energy coming online to include solar and wind, refurbishment of nuclear plants and deregulation of Hydro One;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows to obtain answers to the following questions:

"How much of the debt remains?

"When will it be eliminated from Ontario taxpayers' hydro bills?"

I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker, and present it to Abbigail.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here about the future of 80 long-term-care beds in the village of Tavistock, signed by a great many people, not only in Tavistock but all the areas around it. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Tavistock's Bonnie Brae Health Care Centre is an 80-bed, D-class nursing home that must be either rebuilt or closed by July 2014; and

"Whereas there is currently an application by a private operator to move the 80 licensed beds outside of Oxford county to the city of London, despite the recent opening of two other long-term-care homes in Middlesex county in 2010; and

"Whereas long-term-care wait times in Oxford county can be as much as 135 days longer than in Middlesex county; and

"Whereas Tavistock receives referrals from the nearby Waterloo Wellington CCAC, which has among the highest waits for long-term care in the province;

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario retain these beds in Tavistock and seek partners to fast-track replacement of the Bonnie Brae as part of Ontario's 10-year plan to modernize 35,000 long-term-care beds."

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present this petition on their behalf. I affix my signature, as I agree with the petition.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a report from Ontario's Auditor General on the province's air ambulance service, Ornge, found a web of questionable financial deals where tens of millions of taxpayers' dollars have been wasted and public safety compromised;

"Whereas Ornge officials created a 'mini-conglomerate' of private entities that enriched former senior officers and left taxpayers on the hook for $300 million in debt;

"Whereas government funding for Ornge climbed 20% to $700 million, while the number of patients it airlifted actually declined;

"Whereas a subsidiary of Ornge bought the head office building in Mississauga for just over $15 million and then leased it back to Ornge at a rate 40% higher than fair market rent;

"Whereas the Liberal Minister of Health completely failed in her duty to provide proper oversight of Ornge;

"Whereas, despite being made fully aware of the situation at Ornge, the Minister of Health continues to supply Ornge with funding to transport 20,000 patients by land transport each year, despite the fact that Ornge only carries 3,000 patients;

"Whereas Ornge is being paid an average of $7,700 for each patient they transfer by air and $1,700 for each patient they transfer by land ambulance, both clearly amounts vastly in excess of reasonable compensation for the services provided;

"Whereas this latest scandal follows the eHealth boondoggle where $2 billion in health dollars have been wasted;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario immediately appoint a special all-party select committee to investigate the scandals surrounding Ornge."

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition and I affix my name to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2012 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 27, 2012, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker. I rise to offer my party and the PC caucus's response to yesterday's budget address.

As I said in my National Post column yesterday, in my job I try every day to imagine Ontario as I'd like it to be: a place with a hopeful future, where opportunities abound for people who work hard, who take risks to succeed; a place that offers the highest quality of life anywhere on the planet, with good schools; excellent, accessible health care; prosperous, welcoming, safe and diverse communities; world-leading infrastructure—a place that helps the most vulnerable in our communities. These are the things I want for Ontario, and I try to visualize them every day when I come here to work for the people of this province in this great place. It's a touchstone for me. It guides my thinking, it guides my decisions, and I know it motivates my PC caucus colleagues. I like to think it's the kind of Ontario that all of us here hope for, all those watching or listening at home.

But in order for me to imagine the kind of Ontario we all want to live in and contribute to, you need to have a realistic point of reference, and that reference point necessarily means Ontario as it exists today. It means to get to that great place, we need to take stock of what's actually happening on the ground across this great province, where things actually stand.

Now, Speaker, the optimist in me says Ontario today remains a place of enormous potential. We are a civil place. We are free. We are governed by the rule of law. We have a well-educated, dedicated workforce and we have tremendous, still-untapped natural resources that are in demand worldwide. We are uniquely situated in the heart of the vast North American marketplace for Ontario expertise, Ontario goods, Ontario services. We are inventors, discoverers, innovators, builders; we are thinkers and we're doers. In short, we have everything we need in Ontario, not just to survive, but to thrive in 2012, in the 21st century. These are the fundamentals that have always made Ontario great, the Ontario that attracted my grandparents from then-Czechoslovakia to build their home here—and that should continue to be open to the best and the brightest, those trying to find refuge from across the world right here in Ontario today. These are the strengths upon which we should be building our future.

So many of them are in place right here and right now, but the reality is, as I take stock, that some of those fundamentals are still missing—and if they're not missing, they're in a state of neglect and disrepair. So here's one of them, and it's much on our minds in this place today: I speak of our fiscal foundations in Ontario, or, more plainly put, whether we have the money to pay for the things we all most value: health care, education, world-leading infrastructure and so on. This is the fundamental building block for our province and, indeed, for a stable, prosperous society, because if the money's not there, then none of the rest is possible.

Ontarians understand this. By and large, Speaker, we are a thrifty people. We know intuitively that we can't live beyond our means as individuals or that, if we do, sooner or later we hit a wall. As a friend of mine likes to say, there will be month left at the end of the money. We'll max our credit cards, some could even lose their homes, and for some, especially in trying times like these, there's the threat of personal bankruptcy. So Ontarians inherently understand that there are limits, that there are things that we'd like to have and there are things that we need to have, and that sometimes in life you have to choose between them.

Businesses understand this as well. That's what business is: Money comes in, money goes out, and they live right on that line every single day. They've got to stay lean. They've got to compete. They've got to do things better and more efficiently than their rivals. They have to innovate. They have to have the next best thing, or else they go out of business. Sadly, it happens every day, and

then here come the creditors, here come the shareholders, here comes the bailiff, and there goes your business, there goes your home.

1540

So the idea that you've got to pay as you go and watch the pennies is a basic value that everyone here in Ontario understands—or almost everyone, because the checks and restraints and rules that apply to individuals and families and businesses that I described don't always seem to apply in government, and to this one especially. It seems like there's never really a threat of being fired for making a wrong decision, for taking advantage of taxpayers, there's never the threat of bankruptcy, and there seems to be no real penalty for screwing up—at least, that's how it sounds to most of the people who pay the bills.

People say, "How come they can get away with it and I can't? How come my business has to live within its means every day and the government doesn't?" These are good questions, and I get them all the time and I know my colleagues here in the House do as well. So it's little wonder, and no surprise, that many hard-pressed Ontarians—women and men, business owners—were looking in this place yesterday, as the budget was read, for some of those answers. It was budget day, the one day of the year when government is expected to actually account for itself, to bring out the ledger, to show people how much of their money is coming in and how much is going out, and, importantly, where it is all going, whether the numbers actually add up, and if they don't add up, then why not.

So, Speaker, yesterday what did they get? What did they see? What did they hear in this budget? And now, almost 24 hours later, what can they conclude today?

Let's start with the surface of the budget yesterday, the language in yesterday's budget. I was struck by words like these, and I'll read a few back to you, Speaker: begin discussions, consider, seek input, delay, encourage, consult, review, set up a panel, seek advice, consult on the details, help enhance—it goes on and on.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Any action?

Mr. Tim Hudak: No action verbs, I say to my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. What we heard in the budget yesterday was the language of equivocation and the language of evasion. It's all light, it's content-free and it doesn't really mean anything. They're the kind of words that you use, Speaker, when you've got nothing left to say of substance. Those words, those exact phrases, are right out of the 2012 Ontario Liberal budget. It was a budget titled Strong Action for Ontario, but it contained no action verbs. So the title and the language, Speaker, were not a good start, and it was downhill from there.

It gets worse, especially for those 600,000 women and men who woke up this morning and now have no job to go to—they're out pounding the pavement, emailing out their resumés, looking for a job to help make ends meet, to put bread on the table again for their families; for those who are underemployed, knowing that they could be in a better spot; for those who have to contemplate the reality of moving to other provinces because there's no work here in Ontario. Six hundred thousand people: That's actually the combined populations of Burlington and Brampton. These folks were looking for a little accountability yesterday, too. But you know what else, Speaker? They were looking for a little hope. They were looking for a little bit of optimism, a plan for a better day, a job at the end of that long line, the endless string of emails.

But the budget failed them, and it failed them in two of the most basic ways.

First, it's not just the total absence of any kind of jobs plan—although that's true; there was no jobs plan in this budget, despite 600,000 unemployed people in the province—it's the fact that the budget actually makes things worse for job creators who could help get our 600,000 unemployed women and men back to work. So this government actually, in the face of a jobs crisis, decided to throw up even more barriers to actual job creation. They have effectively increased the tax load by cancelling what they promised as the next round of business tax reductions.

In the middle of an economic downturn, in the middle of a jobs crisis, they made the wrong choice. They chose to have higher taxes on job creators, and we in the Ontario PC caucus want to see lower taxes on job creators. We want them to create jobs in the province. That was failure number one, Speaker.

Here's the second problem: The budget yesterday does far too little to steer us off the path towards a massive $30-billion deficit and a looming $411-billion debt. As huge as these numbers are, as hard to grasp as a number the size of $411 billion can be, they're not abstractions at all to businesses, to investors, to entrepreneurs. A $411-billion debt and a $30-billion deficit along the way to that are a clear signal to job creators and to credit agencies that Ontario cannot afford those things I talked about at the outset of my remarks, the things that made Ontario great and strong and prosperous in the past, things that have made Ontario an attractive place to relocate to, to expand, to invest in, to create jobs: things like good infrastructure, a competitive business climate with low taxes, superior public services, and flexible and responsible and pro-growth regulation.

Remember, Speaker, these aren't my numbers; I didn't make these up. They're Don Drummond's numbers, the economist hired by the McGuinty government to provide them with the path forward. It's Mr. Drummond's cautionary tale. Mr. Drummond basically said that unless we take immediate and measurable steps to balance the budget by 2017-18, Ontario will drop off a cliff and into the maw of a $30-billion deficit and $411 billion in accumulated debt.

So after about a year of buildup—you may recall Mr. Drummond was appointed during the 2011 budget—this was supposed to be the Don-Drummond-inspired budget. Where is the road map for getting us the critical way to 2017-18, to the destination that Mr. Drummond so emphatically said we needed to reach? It wasn't there, Speaker.

In fact, the budget's own spending numbers keep going up and up until 2015. This is a budget that increases spending; it doesn't decrease it. The deficit is actually up, not down.

Sadly, it's no surprise. I mean, that's what the Liberal budgets have done. That's what Liberal spending numbers do. But at least in Mr. Drummond's report, there's some detail on how to support those numbers, how to get back on path. After a while, in the Liberal budget yesterday, the spending curve mysteriously starts to flatline until, as if by magic, it hits the Drummond target of a balanced budget by 2017. So the deficit continues to head up and then, all of a sudden, as if by magic, a few years down the road it heads towards balance.

When you look at this and you look at the chart in the budget—we see the deficit going up—there's no explanation as to why magically it declines towards balance in 2017. There are no details in the budget. Nobody knows how they magically bend that cost curve.

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak: There are many suggestions on how to characterize the budget here from my colleagues in the PC benches. They're perplexed as well because they say where they want to go, but they have no steps to take us there. Most of Mr. Drummond's recommendations that had to do with actually making some tough decisions to rein in runaway spending to control our costs were rejected by the government.

1550

If it was a revenue increase, they were all for it. They embraced it with open arms. But if it was a cost-reduction measure, it disappeared. I'll make the argument today, Speaker, even within 24 hours of the budget being read, that it simply cannot sustain serious scrutiny. It won't stand the test of time.

So this government's sort of stage-managed tough talk, I think in short course, will be revealed as nothing more than focus group test and spin. It is not an austerity budget—not even close. Spending is actually up by $2 billion, not down. As a result, there's actually no reduction in the deficit; it's greater than last year.

The government is projecting the exact same deficit for 2012-13, pretty well—a hundred million here or there. And believe it or not, in 14 out of 24 cabinet ministries spending actually increases. So all 24 cabinet ministers, to paint a picture, go cap in hand asking for more spending despite the fact that they claim it's an austerity budget, and 14 are given increases in their budgets.

You know what, Speaker? That actually represents, as well, when you look at the value of the budget—so of those 14 ministries, more than half actually got increases. That represents 82% of the total budget. Let me say that again: The government increased spending across 82% of their budget. So if this wasn't the year for this Premier to finally start saying no, how much worse does it actually have to get?

You paid Mr. Drummond to do work. He did good work, very informative for the House. It's the first actually objective view we've had of the state of government finances. I thank him for the work that he did.

Mr. Speaker, I worry it's all for naught, because what Mr. Drummond said and these guys said they were going to do didn't happen. Spending is up $2 billion, the deficit is up, and 14 out of 24 ministries—representing 82% of the budget—saw spending increases.

In the face of all that, the government continues its trademark spending at a pace of $1.8 million an hour more than it takes in. So approximately $2 million we go further into debt during question period every time we have it. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, we're spending $1.8 million more than we take in in revenue.

I said this very directly, Speaker, upon reviewing the budget yesterday: It is a surprisingly weak budget and disappointingly so. It was a disappointing response to a serious and deepening jobs and spending crisis in Ontario under the McGuinty Liberals, a budget with no plan to manage down Ontario's looming $411-billion debt. That will worsen investor and business confidence, confidence that will be further eroded by the budget's increase in business taxes—in the middle of a downturn, I'll reinforce—both of which throw roadblocks to expansion and investment, roadblocks in front of economic investment and job creation. It's anti-growth when it called out for a pro-growth budget.

We saw a lot of, as I said, studies. We saw a lot of postponements and gradual phase-in. We saw one-time sell-offs or initiatives. All that adds up to, Speaker, is kicking the can further down the road, and it's some can. The deficit now is three times the size of all the other provinces' combined. The deficit for 2011 actually increased over the previous year and doesn't decrease for another. There is a complete lack of a jobs plan, except for creating another advisory body. The single, only, unique jobs plan in this budget was the creation of an advisory body. I'll add to that: There is also a firm commitment by this government that that advisory body will have a meeting.

You know what we'll see, too. We've seen this pattern before. Starting tomorrow, we'll see a phony war with Ottawa over equalization payments. Whatever. It's predictable as summer following spring; just wait for it.

There's no concrete action on the cost of public sector compensation; no plan whatsoever to address the largest driver in the budget: the labour cost of the public service. They will have more consultations, Speaker, but no action.

So the only conclusion I think you can actually draw is that the McGuinty Liberals still think they have a revenue problem, not a spending problem. They believe their problem is they're not getting enough money from taxpayers and from businesses to fulfil their never-ending appetite to spend more money. But I assure you, Speaker, that's not what Ontario taxpayers think, that's not what Ontario business leaders think and it's not what the Ontario PC Party thinks. It's time to address spending in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, I had the chance last week to visit New York City to meet with some credit rating agencies, investment institutions, some of the banks, and look at investment worldwide. You know, I said to them: "What are the top three things you should do to create jobs in a province, a state, a country—whatever jurisdiction?" They said, "Number one, reduce your debt; number two, reduce your debt; and number three, lower business taxes to invite investment into your province or your state." That's what they should have done.

So, Speaker, for our part, we've been very clear on what we want to see and what we think is the right path forward for our great province of Ontario to make us the engine of job growth again, the leader in Confederation and not a have-not province for one day more. What do we believe in? We believe in policies to nurture the right climate for job creation, policies that actually reduce the size and cost of government. For months now, I've been calling for a pro-growth, integrated plan to rein in the bloated public sector on one side, but on the other side, too, to create a dynamic private sector economy to create jobs.

You can't cut your way to prosperity: You also need a jobs plan. You need a growth plan. These are the steps that should have been taken years ago, and if we had, we would not be in this mess today. I believe in this plan, and we will fight for it every single day here in the Ontario Legislature to move Ontario forward again.

You know, Speaker, I had a chance to sit across the table from the Premier last November. I sat down in his office and I presented these plans, piece by piece: the pro-growth, pro-jobs plan to make Ontario a leader again, and a plan to rein in the size and cost of government, to actually cut spending, not increase it. I put those across the table to the Premier and I think that, sadly, that's the last we've seen of them, because not one of those good ideas appeared in yesterday's budget. That's why I would have headed down an entirely different path, Speaker, had that task fallen to me last year, with an urgent fall economic update that actually would have reduced spending, not increased it; to integrate the Drummond planning with a top-to-bottom full program review; and to bring forward an early budget that reduced the deficit and put us on the path of balanced books and job creation in the province of Ontario.

Along the way, Ontario would have seen the advent of an integrated, pro-growth plan that actually reduced the size and cost of government on one side of the ledger and fostered a dynamic private sector economy on the other.

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A dramatically smaller cabinet, down to 16 members—that would focus on jobs, spending and the debt crisis. It would have held ministers personally responsible, financially responsible for missing fiscal targets—to actually put their paycheques where their mouths are, to hit those goals, to balance the books, to reduce red tape, to hold cabinet accountable for the results they promised to taxpayers.

An Ontario PC government would have brought in an immediate mandatory public sector pay freeze—no exceptions, no special rules—and a plan to fix our broken public sector salary arbitration system to respect the ability of taxpayers to pay the bills, to respect local economic circumstances.

We would have brought in competition in the delivery of government services. I don't believe that the same public sector unions should get the same contract each and every year. Open it up for competition. Let the best quality of service at the best price to the taxpayer reign supreme, whether it's the public sector unions, private sector unions, small business, not-for-profit. We're not ideological about it. We want the best quality of services at the best price for the taxpayers who pay the bills and depend on those services.

A PC government would have brought in lower taxes on job creators, not higher taxes, as the McGuinty Liberals are doing.

We would put in place our plan to create 200,000 jobs in the skilled trades by modernizing our apprenticeship system, moving to a one-to-one journeyman-to-apprentice ratio to keep that talent here in the province of Ontario and not heading to Alberta, to Saskatchewan, to Manitoba to find their way ahead.

We would have brought in a more flexible and responsive regulatory system where all ties go to growth, where all ties go to job creation. I would have said to my cabinet, "You'll reduce the regulatory burden by a minimum 33%. If you don't do it, I'll dock your pay and I'll dock my pay as Premier as well."

We would have changed the attitude of government. It seems like every time a small business leader has the audacity to try to create a job in Ontario, we have an army of bureaucrats standing in their way, telling them what they can't do, telling them to wait for that email, telling them to wait for that call that never comes. We will change the attitude of government to get out of the way of business, get behind them, help them create jobs and make Ontario open for investment again.

We would bring in a pro-jobs policy that treats northern Ontario's resources as resources, not as props in a theme park. Our view of northern Ontario is that if Ontario is the engine of Confederation, northern Ontario is the fuel for that engine. It is not meant to be frozen in time as one giant park. It's a place where people live, where families want to raise their children, where they want to find a good job. We would free up northern Ontario to create jobs, to develop resources and bring job creation across northern Ontario again.

Our pro-jobs policy includes an energy policy that gets back to basics, that makes energy policy about reliability and affordability, not a social program. A PC government would end the outdated European industrial policy that sees us in Ontario paying up to 10 times the price of power for wind and solar, that then sees us signing contracts based on taking power when the wind blows and the sun shines—to take that surplus and then pay Quebec and New York and other states to take that power off our hands. This is a policy that's been rejected wherever it was started before. It's time Ontario got off

that path, back to reliable, affordable energy so businesses will create jobs and consumers can actually pay their bills again.

This is what we would do. This is our plan to create jobs. This is our plan to get the books back in order.

Do you know what, Speaker? I presented that plan to Dalton McGuinty back in November. My colleagues here in the House have brought it up over and over again in debate, in press conferences, in their columns back in their ridings. It's not about politics. It's not about doing what may or may not be good for our party. It's about doing the right thing for the people of the province of Ontario, to fight every day for those 600,000 unemployed.

Speaker, we saw no jobs plan. We saw no real spending control plan. Sadly, of all those good ideas that we presented to the members in government opposite, directly to the Premier himself across the desk in his office, none of it appeared in yesterday's budget. It has no jobs plan. It has no debt-control plan. This budget is trying to get off the ground without having either a pro-growth jobs plan or a deficit-reduction plan. It has no jobs policy. It has no plan to deal with our crippling debt.

We hoped for better, Speaker. We hoped we'd walk into the budget yesterday and see a jobs plan. We hoped we'd walk into the budget yesterday and see a plan to actually rein in spending, to reduce spending, to balance the books, to stop this mortgaging of the future of our kids and grandkids because they didn't have the leadership to make tough decisions today. We saw no jobs plan, we saw no debt-control plan, and the Ontario PCs cannot support this budget. We will not support this budget. It fails the people of Ontario.

Speaker, I said it yesterday and I say it again today and I'll say it tomorrow—for however long it takes: There is no need for Ontario to be condemned to a $30-billion deficit. There's no reason Ontario should be condemned to a continuing stagnant economic growth regime. So I will continue—and my colleagues beside me will as well—to promote our positive Ontario PC plan to reduce the size and cost of government, to build a more dynamic, growing economy with new jobs, that sees Ontario lead again. We owe this to Ontario families. We owe this to Ontario businesses. We owe this to all those who chose to make Ontario home, as well as those born and raised here. They've invested their lives in this great province, and they know, like we do, what Ontario is capable of being, capable of actually becoming again.

Ontario is like a grand old family home, and in so many ways, it has been lovingly preserved for generations. As they say in real estate, Speaker, it's got good bones. But the foundations are going, and it falls to this generation of leadership, in this place, to shore them up, to build for a better tomorrow, to get our economy moving again, to fight each and every day for those out of work, for those leaving the province, to stay here, to find that good job, to raise their families.

We believe that there are better days yet to come in the province of Ontario. Our best days are yet ahead of us. We just need a change in leadership, and we need this plan to move us forward, to create jobs and get our books back in balance. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Parkdale–High Park has moved adjournment of the debate. Agreed? Agreed.

Debate adjourned.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Orders of the day? Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Do the members agree? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1608.

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Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
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Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
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McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
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Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
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Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
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Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 29 March 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 29 mars 2012

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ACCEPTING SCHOOLS ACT, 2012
LOI DE 2012 POUR DES ÉCOLES TOLÉRANTES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 26, 2012, on the motion for second reading of Bill 13, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to bullying and other matters / Projet de loi 13, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui a trait à l'intimidation et à d'autres questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour and a privilege to stand today to speak about Bill 13.

Quite frankly, this is not a partisan issue. There is, of course, sentiment all around the House that what we want to do and what we stand together on, shoulder to shoulder, as it were, is to keep our children safe, to prevent teen suicide, the kind of occurrence that happened with our friend Jamie and others who have killed themselves because of bullying in their schools. We are speaking really together around this issue.

I want to send some particular notes of respect out to a number of groups: first and foremost, the students themselves—I hosted a presser here with a number of them from our separate school system who came, and I'm going to speak about that in a minute; also to the teachers from all the teachers' unions who have stood up for their students, stood up on behalf of their students very bravely and courageously; and for other organizations like Egale that have been outspoken about this; the Falconer report and others who have pressed this government and pressed all of us to actually take action.

I also want to thank those who have crafted bills; we've seen two of them on this issue. We're looking forward to being in committee to deal with clause-by-clause examination of those bills, because all of this is important. Particular kudos go, I think, to the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association, who have been unbelievably brave and courageous in their stance for students.

As I said, I want to mention some students in particular: the students who came to Queen's Park. This was in a presser we just had about a week ago. We had here some incredibly courageous young people. We had Trevor James, who is a straight youth from Peterborough, who "got up at 4:30 a.m. Wednesday and took a two-hour bus ride to Toronto to talk about school clubs for gay students."

He was flanked, and I'm quoting here from the Toronto Star, "by Leanne Iskander, 17, who self-identified as queer, and Christopher McKerracher, 16, a bisexual man, both from Mississauga's St. Joseph Secondary School."

All of them were here speaking with one voice about, if anything, strengthening Bill 13. Here's a quote from James. He said, "'I love my school. It's my home away from home.... We are not fighting. We just wanted to be treated equally. If we do not accept racism and nationalism in school, why is it okay to be homophobic?'"

"To call these clubs anything but gay-straight alliances is a denial of queer students' existence … added James, a student at St. Peter's Secondary School."

And kudos to Leanne Iskander, who has organized a group of Catholic students for gay-straight alliances.

I also wanted to cite some of the studies that have been done by a number of groups interested in education. People for Education sent in some information to this government about Bill 13, again trying to strengthen the bill, trying to add to the bill. They talk about the role of principals and that special-needs students at one in three GTA elementary schools are not getting the recommended level of support. They talk, as do others, about the safe schools action team and the Falconer report, again about strengthening this bill in terms of strengthening the schools' ability to deal with the issue.

One of the problems with this initiative is that there's not funding attached to it: funding for special students, funding to help those principals and teachers who want to help their students, funding for special-needs students—oversight, even, because we know that bullying often happens where teachers' eyes and education assistants' eyes are not, so oversight for those playgrounds, those lunchrooms, those places where bullying can take place and nobody is watching. So again, funding is needed to strengthen oversight of those places. All the reports come together and speak about that, and they speak about that in some detail.

Certainly, when we're spending $150 million on EQAO tests—tests that teachers are loath to administer and really are not fans of—surely some of that money could be redistributed to help children who are victims of bullying, to help the teachers who deal with them and, quite frankly, to help the bullies themselves, because if

the only alternative is to suspend children with problems, i.e., the bullies, then that's not an answer either. All children, even those who are bullies, need an education, and we need to deal with this as adults. We need to deal with it in a loving fashion.

I also want to acknowledge all those across the Christian spectrum, particularly those Catholic parents in our school system who have written to me and to whom I've responded and corresponded with. I speak as a Christian, a United Church clergyperson, and I remind everyone who is Christian, in this debate, that Jesus was very outspoken about how we should treat our neighbour. He said we should love them, pure and simple. We should love our neighbour. Implied in that is that we should not judge them; he also said, "Judge not." He was pretty emphatic about that, and he didn't put caveats around that. He didn't say, "Some neighbours, not other neighbours." He didn't say, "Judge not, but judge some people and not others." He was completely outspoken; neither did he ever say anything about homosexuality. Check your Scripture.

All Christians have a vested interest. All people of all faiths and all people of no faith have a vested interest in the well-being of our students. Sadly, when you look at the suicide statistics, you see that LBGTQ students are the ones most at risk of suicide. Sadly, when you look at the statistics for that group, you see trans students at greatest risk and they grow up to continue to be at great risk. So at the age that they are in school, that's the opportunity we have to intervene. That's the opportunity we have to make a difference in their lives.

0910

I know, because of working on Toby's Law around the transgender issue, that as trans children age and grow into adults they represent a group that has a 50% poverty rate, a 50% depression rate, a 50% attempted suicide rate. Again, as you look through the spectrum of LGBTQ people, you see the same sort of heightened statistics.

Where does it start? It starts in high school. It starts in public school. It starts when children are young. That's where we have a chance to really influence them. I proudly went out, you know, around the Pink Shirt Day—and I know that Pink Shirt Day is coming up—in our schools, and it's a wonderful opportunity for everybody to engage; to add their support to our schools in standing up against bullying.

But I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that critically here, critically, is that we need the input of our students. We need our students to be able to define the supports they need, because what we are about here in this House, presumably around this bill, is supporting our students. We all agree on that. We want to support our students, particularly our vulnerable students, our students that have been bullied like Jamie, who was, by the way, bullied because of his sexual orientation. We want to support these students, and part of supporting these students is to support them in supporting themselves. When they say—and they don't all say, but when they do say—that they want a gay-straight alliance in their schools, we need to be behind them. We need to be supporting them in that. We need to be standing with them shoulder to shoulder, just like these brave young people that came to Queen's Park, a some two-hour bus ride away, to take a risk, to stand in front of the cameras, to say, "We're queer, we're here and we need your love." Because ultimately that's what we're speaking about as well: We're speaking about this assembly coming together to act out of love for our students.

I want to just share some quotes, and these quotes are from various groups. First of all, let's look at Egale. Egale Canada says, "GSAs ... demonstrably improve the lives of LGBTQ youth, increasing their safety and improving their self-esteem."

By simply existing, GSAs present "students with the idea that LGBTQ identities have a place in the school, and society at large. Directly engaging LGBTQ youth and their allies within school, as well as those who are ambivalent regarding LGBTQ themes, is an excellent means towards addressing school climate, isolation, promoting social connectedness." They cite a study in California that found gay-straight alliance presence and participation in high school to be highly correlated with decreased depression, substance abuse and lifetime suicide attempts among LGBTQ young adults.

I also want to quote from the Falconer report, where he again—"increase benchmark costs for all components of the funding formula ... to close gap between funding ... and actual costs..."

You know, it's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that when I first ran six years ago in a by-election the funding formula was one of the main issues that plagued our community and our schools, our teachers and principals and students, and it's still there. It's still there. Unfortunately, the McGuinty government has done nothing to focus on that, and here we see, yet again, the funding formula impacting a sensitive issue here. So again, Falconer is calling on some action around that.

In 2008, the safe schools action team consultations "overwhelmingly confirmed that the most effective way to enable all students to learn about healthy and respectful relationships is through the school curriculum." So again, curriculum changes; supervision when students are most vulnerable; allowing students to have a say in the kinds of groups that they want to form; what those groups are called; how those groups operate—these are all parts of the answer to the problem. Bill 13 goes part of the way. We want it to go all the way.

Certainly, again, we see that in the Roots of Youth Violence, an executive summary, that was done, again in 2008. A quote here says, "Making headway on issues of safety involves abandoning the failed philosophy of addressing safety through discipline/enforcement mechanisms. It does not work." They couldn't be more emphatic. "While there will always be a place for discipline in identifying standards of behaviour, the reality that has thus far not been accepted in the system is that marginalized youth cannot be punished/suspended into becoming engaged....

"Hope needs to be restored through programs and initiatives that create prospects for success for youth who are currently on the outside looking in."

Unfortunately, Bill 13 does nothing to address the inadequacy of staffing and supports for students at risk of bullying.

So again, when you look at the bully and the bullied, you're looking at two students whom the system has failed and continues to fail. We again, I think, are of one mind in trying to address that issue. That's the issue. We want to help the bullied, and we don't want to marginalize the bully so that they continue to move through life using those kinds of behaviours, continuing to move through life to be homophobic or aggressive or violent. That's not what public education should be about. Public education is for all children; it should be for all children.

Certainly, I hearken back to my own school experience and to those of my children. I can tell you that anyone around this room, if they were truly honest with those viewing, with our constituents and with themselves, would know that children who are LGBTQ are still at risk. They were at risk; they have been at risk; they were at risk for my children's generation, for my generation; and they're still at risk. We all have witnessed events in our educational experience where children who have identified as LGBTQ were bullied. We have all seen it happen. We've all intervened, or not. We've all been the bullied or the bully, some of us. We know that this is a reality that touches everyone. There's nobody who has not had an experience of this. There's nobody who hasn't seen it at work.

To confuse the issue and say, "Well, bullying happens for all sorts of reasons"—of course it does. It happens for weight reasons. It happens for ethnic reasons. There are all sorts of reasons. There are as many reasons as there are children to be bullied and to bully. But having said that, when we look at the suicide statistics, the most at-risk children inevitably come down to the LGBTQ community, and they were, in fact, the instigators, those who pushed this government, those who came before this government, who took the risk as they did when they came to Queen's Park that day to stand up and say, "We're here. We're not going away. We're at risk and we're standing with those at risk, and we need to be heard. We need to be heard."

Again, to come back to those other groups that I think deserve incredible kudos around this: the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association; those who are on the front lines with children; those people of faith who, out of their faith, love their students and work with their students. Those people have been very forthright in their support for this bill, and many support even strengthening this bill.

I know our education critic who did the leadoff speech on this, our member from Toronto–Danforth, has been very forthright about where we think this bill should go, the amendments that we will be bringing forth in committee, the support we have in our own constituencies for it, the support we have around this House and the necessity to get on with it, the necessity to get something into place—the necessity also, as I've said, to get into place the necessary supports, the necessary funding so that this bill can have some teeth, so that it can actually work, so that it's not just window dressing on a problem, but it actually becomes a solution to a problem.

That's as necessary as anything else. It's necessary in the memory of Jamie. It's necessary in the memory of all of those children who have suffered, and it's certainly necessary to those three who came to Queen's Park, and to all the brave teachers and others who stood with them.

0920

I must mention ETFO and OSSTF, as well as OECTA. I mean, these are teachers who have been on the front lines, who have demanded of this government an action on this front, but also, of course, some follow-up, also some funding to help implement it, which is not part of this, and also have suggested ways of finding that funding. In light of the budget and trying to find money from parcel A to pay for parcel B, might I suggest—respectfully so—that the EQAO, with $150 million worth, is one of the places that we could look in the educational funding package to fund programs for our vulnerable students, because again, this bill needs teeth; again, this bill needs clout; again, this bill needs backing

To go back to my original points, Mr. Speaker: Do we support Bill 13? Absolutely, we do, in the New Democratic Party. Do we want to see it strengthened? Absolutely, and we will be introducing amendments at committee to do so. Do we support those children who want gay-straight alliances in their schools? Yes, absolutely. We recognize that it's not in every school they want it, but in the schools where they do want it, they should be allowed to have it. We should be standing with our students. That purportedly is what this bill is about. And yes, we stand with the teachers, all the teachers' unions, who day in and day out do just that: stand with their students. We recognize that whether it's separate school teachers in OECTA or those teachers in OSSTF or ETFO, all teachers are together on this one; they support their students and the students' voice in what they call their groups and when and where those groups take place.

I also finally want to thank the students, because without them this never would have happened. I want to thank those brave souls who have stood up against bullying and who stand up against bullying, and I want to send some compassionate messages out to those parents and those children who are the bulliers. The answer to them, Mr. Speaker, is not throwing them out of school, kicking them to the curb, taking away their right to public education, but a program that actually deals with the problems that develop into the creation of a bully—and they are myriad.

So we in the New Democratic Party, with the leadership of Andrea Horwath, stand on the side of children. We stand there with love; we stand there with compassion; we stand there with people of faith and those who don't have faith. Finally and foremost, we stand there to prevent the deaths of our children—our children; they are our children. And we recognize the impact that this bill

will have if it's done well. That's our common cause here.

Let's get this bill done. Let's get it done well, let's get amendments in that will strengthen this bill and let's never, ever have an instance in this province again where a child commits suicide because of harassment. Let's stand with our LBGTQ students. Let's stand with students who want a voice. Let's stand with them because we know, we've experienced it in our own educational experience, our children have, and we stand here to prevent our grandchildren from having to go through the same thing.

On that note, I'll close, and of course I'll look forward to being a part of the consultation process on this matter through our education critic, Mr. Tabuns, from Toronto–Danforth. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: First of all, I'd like to acknowledge the member from Parkdale–High Park for her deep and genuine commitment and compassion to the eradication of bullying. I agree with her completely. We are in this together and on the same page.

As a mother of two young teens, I know first-hand how bullying affects children—my own children and other children in Pickering–Scarborough East. Bullying can and does happen in many ways to children. My son was the tallest child in a primary grade, and the last person people thought would be bullied, but he was, physically. But it takes on many other forms, as we know.

As the chair of a school community council in my community for many, many years, I directly have been involved in many bullying situations, and I know how it can play out and how the process to address bullying can become very difficult for all parties if not managed properly, without proper communications, without support for everyone involved: the victims, the witnesses, the bystanders, the school staff, the parents and, last but not least, the bully himself or herself. I'm also very aware, through my involvement with the Durham District School Board special-ed committee, of the need to be sensitive for children with special needs and disabilities, and how they can be severely affected by bullying. We must make every effort to ensure this most vulnerable population is supported.

I've also seen how empowered children become in our schools when they are in an environment that creates a positive learning place for them, an environment that creates accountability, an environment where everyone adopts zero tolerance to bullying and, most importantly, respect for all. But we need to do more, and that's why I'm supporting Bill 13. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much. The member from Parkdale–High Park, I do respect her views. She's well-informed and very capable, competent commentary on this file.

I do want to read a thing from the Ontario Catholic school trustees, a document called Respecting Difference. I think it's important. There are some subtle words in here. You need to listen carefully, because I'm quoting it:

"Beliefs across a whole number of areas, including religion and cultural practices and more personal matters such as acceptable sexual conduct, will differ and these different beliefs are an aspect of living in a multicultural and pluralistic society that honours human rights and diversity. While it is an all too human temptation to insist that others share our beliefs and to eradicate the frameworks that make a variety of choices possible, forced acceptance of beliefs about which we may differ is not the hallmark of a free and democratic society but" the complete opposite.

What that's saying is that someone forcing you to accept their interpretation of their world is in itself bullying. That's the philosophical argument that I believe is important. I believe all forms of bullying are irresponsible and unacceptable.

The point we're making here is tolerance. I believe this document from the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association, Respecting Difference, summarizes particularly how I feel about the issue. I believe that the secular society forcing views on non-secular society is in fact bullying. So if you look at it, we must respect differences and in fact not be bullies ourselves, on both parties. That way we can live harmoniously, and yet in a democracy, we have freedom of choice and freedom of religion. That's what this is about more fundamentally, not bullying someone to accept my way or the highway.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, I can speak volumes to that one, but I won't respond to those comments.

I would just say, though, to the presentation—

Mr. John O'Toole: I didn't write it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no, but I'm just saying—my point is that we can all be accused, as majority governments in this Legislature—Conservatives, Liberals and others—for exactly what you're talking about. That's why I was saying I'll leave that one alone. But anyways, we all have our ideologies.

To my colleague who gave a presentation, I just want to say, as usual, bang on.

I want to put something on the record, though, in regard to bullying itself. Both Bill 13 and Bill 14, which we're going to be discussing later on this afternoon, are obviously good steps towards trying to deal with the issue of bullying. I don't want to argue in any way that we should diminish the value of what these bills bring to this particular issue. But I increasingly get concerned that sometimes, we're looking for legislative solutions when really the solutions are what we do amongst each other as human beings. I have this little bit of a fear that somehow or other, we think that if we only can only come up with the right law, the world's going to be a better place. In some cases that may be true, but we really need to challenge ourselves. We need to do public education. We need to use our school systems. We need to, within the family, instil these kinds of beliefs that say, "Listen,

bullying of any form is not acceptable. Respect and tolerance for others is the order of the day."

I've got to say, as a young boy growing up in northern Ontario in the late 1950s and 1960s, we've come a long way; I can tell you it was a much more intolerant society back in the 1950s and 1960s as I was growing up in our community. Is our community today very tolerant? I would say it's more tolerant than it was, but quite frankly, we still have a ways to go. I think we need to challenge ourselves. There are all kinds of "isms" out there, and we need to do more in order to educate each other on the tolerance of accepting others for who they are. Accepting and embracing that tolerance makes us better people.

0930

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I greatly appreciate the remarks and examples presented by the member from Parkdale–High Park. I think she was bang on in her examples and remarks about this issue of bullying. Safety is the key to student learning. The proposed legislation is about safety in our schools, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that as a former school board trustee with the Toronto District School Board, I've heard and observed many bullying incidents.

Like my colleagues, I want to acknowledge the many stories from our students, from our teachers, from our parents. It took a lot of courage for these people to come and share with us those stories because, at the end of the day, they didn't have to. Especially some of my diverse community: It takes a lot of courage to come out and say and tell us what are their concerns, what are their recommendations.

The proposed legislation, if passed, will protect all students in our schools. Some of my colleagues have already indicated that it will, first of all, bring tougher consequences for bullying and hate-motivated actions; require all publicly funded school boards to support students who want to lead activities that promote understanding and respect for all; require school boards to have policies.

What's wrong with having policies to support and provide resources to our students? This is what is most important for our schools. It also requires school boards to have Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week, so that it raises awareness about what bullying is and how we prevent bullying.

The proposed legislation is clear, with expectations, and increases accountability for everyone. We, as parliamentarians in this House, have a responsibility to make sure every student is safe, and this legislation is just the first step to protect every student, but together we have to do more—of course we have to do more—so that every student can be safe so they can learn, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for this opportunity to talk.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for High Park, you have two minutes to respond.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to all the members for their input—much appreciated. I want to again reiterate, this is about student choice and student safety.

I want to deal with a little word that sticks in my craw a little bit and that's the word "tolerance." We do not ask our parents or our teachers to tolerate our students. We ask them to love them. We do not tolerate difference; we embrace it. And this little word and words like it can make all the difference. They can make all the difference to the safety of our students. What we are calling for here in the New Democratic Party is not the tolerance of students. We're asking for the acceptance and the love of our students, and that's what our teachers have shown us, including our teachers from the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association. They have stood up. They're on the front lines. They are working with our students day in, day out, and they say they love them. They want them to be safe. They do not tolerate them.

So truly, if we want to "respect differences," to use the other catchphrase, truly, if we want to respect differences, we have to—again I go back to the words of Jesus. He did not ask us to tolerate our neighbour; he asked us to love them. He did not ask us to put up with them. He said, "Judge not." We don't judge them; we love them categorically. That was the call upon all of us who are Christians, and certainly in all faiths that is the call upon people of all faiths. And those of no faith but who have ethics and morals, it's a call upon you, too

So when we go from this place, I hope we go keeping our children in mind, keeping what they want in mind, not what we want for them, what they are asking for, and they are asking for the ability to define and direct their own futures. That's called love, Mr. Speaker. That's our call. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I always find these particular conversations in the House extraordinarily personally difficult. I find it very hard not to be emotional about them. Because I think through most of my life this issue has unwantedly and with such great difficulty been at the centre of my life.

First of all, I just want to say some thank yous. I want to thank the member for Toronto–Danforth, if I can call him Peter. I know I'm not supposed to use first names, but I want to tell him I was both moved and inspired by his words and by his conviction.

I also want to thank the member for Parkdale–High Park, as I think she just gave—not just today—a very thoughtful, life-affirming, holistic, humanizing speech. She has dedicated much of her time in this House to the rights of gay and lesbian and transgendered people. I want to thank her publicly for that.

Gilles Bisson, my friend from Timmins–James Bay, thank you for your short, to-the-point, pithy retort. We need friends like you, and I want to thank you for your courage and your conviction.

I also want to thank my friend Laurel Broten, who has worked so darn hard on social justice issues and on leading this bill through.

I want to thank our Premier, who, in spite of what some people say, I think is a darn good Catholic. What many people never know is the kind of personal encouragement he has given me over the years when difficult issues have come up. I want to thank him for his quiet stand-behind-you kind of leadership.

I want to thank Jeff Leal and Maria Van Bommel and many of our rural members, some of whom aren't here. I know that some of them aren't here because of some pretty nasty robocalls that were just pure homophobia the night before the election. They know the courage it took for Maria Van Bommel to go to the Knights of Columbus and stand up for her faith beliefs about the value of human beings, their souls and a higher calling that brings us to this place.

Why is it so difficult? Because I'm tired of being—I thought we finally got past being a gay politician. I remember when we hosted the Pan Am Games in Winnipeg, when I finally no longer had to be the gay mayor, when my partner Rick and I no longer had to be the gay poster couple, when I fought every kind of horrible stereotype by religious extremists like Charles McVety when I tried to become a parent.

The hardest thing—and I mean years of hard work—was to become a parent. My son, Michael, who has fetal alcohol syndrome, is one of the most courageous young people I've ever met. What he has to do to get through life every day, on top of it to have a gay dad and to get bullied at school for having a gay father, to me, was just more than he needed. He kept on saying to me, "But no one else is standing with me. I've only got you." I used to say to him, "I've only got you, Mike."

Why are GSAs so important? I have a wonderful father. He passed away of prostate cancer at 63. He was a small-c conservative, a very prudent businessman. He worked hard his whole life, lost businesses, rebuilt them. He was one of the most incredible entrepreneurs I ever knew. He inspired me. He was one of the most honest people. He was so honest that he would go into a business and the shopkeepers would ask him just to put whatever product he thought, because my father was so honest. He would never put more stuff in the store than he thought he could sell.

You know, I grew up with John Diefenbaker and Tommy Douglas and Lester Pearson. Those are the kinds of people who I want, because my father admired those people, and he got involved in politics because of that. I admired my dad.

It wasn't the opinions of bullies or schoolyard bullies—and when I was growing up, I became a jock. I played football. I figured out the straight guys were the ones who were very athletic, so I became a very good hockey player. I watched my straight friends. I watched my friend who was straight, Jeff, who was tall, six foot two at a far-too-early age. He was a bit effeminate, and everyone thought he was gay and they thought I was straight, so they beat the crap out of him. They tore his underwear. They spit on him. They put excrement in his locker—Jeff, who was a straight kid, who everyone thought was gay. They treated him—they called him an F-A-G and all kinds of other horrible names and beat the crap out of him, and everybody stood by and watched. All these good Christians stood by and watched, and it happened to kid after kid. It wasn't whether or not you were gay; it was whether people thought you were sissy or effeminate, or whether you're the young girl who was overweight. Kids could be cruel, and parents can stand by and watch it.

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I remember going for a walk with my father, who I admired, and he told me that he'd beat queers up. He made some of the most homophobic remarks I'd ever heard. And here, the safe place I thought I had in my house was to go home to my dad and my mom. Those were the people I loved, who I thought loved me.

The reason the GSAs, and not organizations for disabilities or black kids or aboriginal kids, are at the centre of this is because of our social discomfort with sexual orientation. That's what the Hotwire—Charles McVety and a few thousand extremists are going to be out on the front lawn. They're not here talking about kids with disabilities. They have no problem with stopping bullying against young folks who are unfortunately overweight or kids who are a little ungainly or awkward or a bit nerdy or whatever the thing is that brings on that horrible bullying. So it's not just bullying.

I'm going to support Elizabeth Witmer's bill, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, because I think it's the right thing to do, and I want to commend my friends in the Progressive Conservative Party. I don't have any problem with the bill you're presenting. There's nothing in it I disagree with, and I think and I hope that we'll support it. But what it misses—and I don't mean this in a pejorative or a partisan way, because I think on this we have to be Ontarians first—is it's not just bullying; it's the indifference, the ignorance and the rejection that are more toxic.

Understanding that my father couldn't get the fact that his son was gay—and a few years later, sadly, he came down with cancer and died. It was only in the last years of his life that we really reconciled. He couldn't speak to me for three years. He said to me—the last time I saw him, we sat in bed. He was very ill with cancer; you couldn't even touch him. He held my hand, which I knew was very hard for him, and said, "Glen, you know, I fear for you, and for all of the kids like you who are gay. I hated gay people. I thought they were sick and perverse. I didn't want to even imagine that. When I realized my son was gay, I was embarrassed and I was humiliated. And if I thought that way, and you're my son and I couldn't reconcile it, how were all of the other people in power—when you go to get a job, when you try to find a life or have a child or do anything like that, how are people who don't love you, who are not your father, going to treat you? I don't see how you can have a future." I told him I admired him. He said, "I admire you, because"—now I was in my early 30s, and I had just gotten elected for the first time to city council in Winnipeg. He said, "I'm not

sure I would have the courage to live and walk in your shoes, knowing how people like me actually feel about you."

My father was an amazing man. One of the reasons, if you look at my name on the thing—I put his name there, because he never got any recognition in his life. The closest I could get to getting my father's name up there was to put my whole name up there. Every time I walk down there, I say a little prayer for my father and say, "I got there, Dad. I broke through that. I was able to fully contribute to my life."

The reason GSAs are so important, and why I would ask my friend from Durham just to rethink this—I am a Christian. My faith is incredibly important to me. The hardest thing about being in this House is that my type of Christianity, the Anglican faith I grew up with—we're not evangelical. My faith doesn't stand out in front of Queen's Park and tell everyone that they're wrong and who's going to hell and why Tim Hudak and Dalton McGuinty and Andrea Horwath always have it wrong. My faith is reconciliation at the end of the day, and every day I go to bed, there are things I said in this House where I've become intemperate and snapped and said something to one of you, often, that I shouldn't, and I ask for forgiveness. I'm a great fan of—Julia, I forget your riding, but Julia Munro.

Mrs. Julia Munro: York–Simcoe.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: York–Simcoe. She's a Quaker. I was out with my friend David Crombie for hours and we were talking about this. Many of us practise a faith, on both sides of this House, that is quiet, reflective, self-judgemental. The hardest moral issue for me is not my sexual orientation; it's how do I be a loving, gentle, kind person when God gave me such a big mouth? How do I approach everyone with a sense of love and hope and trust, even if we have differences? How do we find what we have in common and put that ahead of ourselves? That's what this bill is about. It's about our ability to touch our common humanity.

As my friend Kathleen and I always say, on the unique journey that we've had in life—and one of the reasons I came into politics was I had been such an admirer of her and her leadership in understanding education. I really think she's one of the best education ministers this province has ever had. When you talk to students, there is a texture to our schools that she brought. When she initiated this legislation when she was minister and started the idea of GSAs and a whole celebration of diversity—it is exactly that word. And my friend from Parkdale–High Park said this: It isn't about tolerance. We want to love and celebrate every child. I wanted to be lifted up, when I was 14 years old, as a Christian. It was important to me. There was a sense of eternity and soul and reconciliation that's much bigger than a reconciliation with the voters. We can debate every medieval interpretation of the Bible; that's not what it's about. Christ asked us very simply to live in the middle of other people's lives, to accept what we don't understand and to reach out and touch the humanity of each other without fear, and to find the courage to do that. I think most of us will know in our lives, at the core of our faith, we're searching for that courage on a day-to-day basis.

You know, it isn't bullying. There's no one here that's suggesting that we shouldn't teach a Catholic perspective in our schools. Let me read Charles McVety, who is a person who, if you had to find the philosophical polar opposite to my world—this is what he recently said in a news article editorial he wrote. He said that Catholic teaching is defined in the document, by referring to the document Pastoral Guidelines to Assist Students of Same Sex Orientation in the 2006 CCCB statement, which the member from Durham mentioned before: "Basing itself on sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity" and a tradition that declared—he's quoting from the bishop's direction—"homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered."

I have to say to the bishops: "You're not allowed to do that anymore." I'm not allowed to say to the Catholics—nor should I—or to other Christians or Muslims or Jews, that because of your faith you're intrinsically disordered. I would never say to you that anything that goes on in your family with the person you love—can you imagine me describing a husband-and-wife relationship as inherently depraved? Can you imagine how it feels to gay and lesbian families and to our children in schools when people like Charles McVety say we're unfit to be parents? How much do you love your children? How would you feel, as an Ontarian or as a Canadian? You feel a little less Canadian. I feel a little less welcome in my own country every time someone like that is endorsed.

It's not that I don't understand it or that I think that everyone's a homophobe; I don't. My father wasn't intentionally homophobic. He arrived honestly through the culture he grew up in, in the 1930s and 1940s and the war, to an attitude about masculinity and some pretty awful attitudes about the role of women. Every time I see Mad Men, it's not that far a stretch from where women lived, and we think we've come a long way.

I'm disappointed when my friend from Markham-Aurora goes on Charles McVety's show to launch his campaign for elected office, and enthusiastically embraces the endorsement of Charles McVety. So I would ask him not to do that. I would ask him to spend more time together with me and other members, and I would like to have more time to try and reconcile with people like that. Because when you take the support of folks—you will remember, this was circulated in my constituency by people. It was put out by the PC Party. It was done with Charles McVety, and it says some horrible things about gay people.

I would ask the party opposite to stop doing that. You wouldn't like it if we put out a heterophobia. I don't believe that most people in this House are homophobic. I don't believe these kinds of political tactics. It is the impression that young people get, including their MPPs. You know, the only thing in this curriculum—and please read it. None of this is actually even true. Gender-bending? You know what it is? It's young girls sometimes

playing the words that young boys—in fairy tales, that the princess runs off to save the prince rather than the other way around.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's Robert Munsch.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's Robert Munsch. Thank you, Kathleen. I mean, this is the kind of stuff that most kids read about. If you want to call it gender-bending and make it sound like something offensive—I just think women have a right to be equally treated, like boys.

When I was a teenager the woman who ran to my rescue was a counsellor named Sue Baker, who was the only gay-positive person in my entire school, who came and told me I was okay. As a matter of fact, she said, "I think good things are coming up for you." There was a point in my life when I had no support at home. None of the family-life education when I was in school meant gay people. Everything was negative. There were no role models. The only role model I ever had was Harvey Milk, and he was shot dead in San Francisco 11 months after he was elected. That was the first person.

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You've got to remember, I was elected in the 1980s in the prairies. I represented fundamentalist Muslims, Christians, Filipinos. I used to go and pray on Sundays with 80 evangelical pastors who had said some of the most horrible things about me because my faith demands reconciliation and listening and not being afraid. So why don't we try to do that? Why don't we actually try to make this Legislature, in a motion in this session, a GSA? Why don't we make this a gay-straight alliance? I think that would be a powerful, powerful tool.

I want to celebrate every child. The hardest issue I've had to deal with since I was there was in a school, one of the high schools. There was a young Pakistani boy who, unlike this—we saw these ads in the National Post, and I give the National Post credit for apologizing for them and withdrawing them. Because this also got large circulation in my constituency, given that a lot of the families in my constituency have two moms or two dads. This family, when they found out that their son came home one day and thought he was a girl when he was going through puberty—which is a way transgender kids are—and his parents had no context to do this, I got a call because the school counsellor didn't know how to deal with this properly and was afraid. The local police officer from the district came to my office very upset, saying, "We can't stop this. They're going to take this young child back to Pakistan for an honour killing." That's what goes on in some communities. Were these terrible parents? If you want to murder your own child, it's pretty terrible. But when people come from a faith culture where they have no context for this, the school can be the only rescue place. So yes, sometimes the school has to stand up to parents to protect the child. That's where I would disagree with the person from Durham: It's not just a matter of freedom of expression; it's a matter of the sanctity of the child's life.

So we were able to intervene with one of the groups, and I want to thank Susan Gapka and the many people in the trans groups, and Davina Hader and these wonderful women who got together with me.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Bring it in. Bring it in.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Absolutely. You and I are there, sister.

That's important, because this child's life was saved. We got a judge. We got a young lawyer who helped us out. We stopped the child from being taken away and killed, and that child is alive.

You can imagine if this happened in my friend Jeff Leal's community of Peterborough. There are some communities that have less capacity to understand this, and that child would have lost their life.

It is about celebrating diversity. It isn't about taking Catholic teaching out of Catholic schools; it's about putting life-affirming, positive images and stories around gay and lesbian children, Muslim children, kids and women of all shapes—that not all girls have to look like Barbie dolls. It is about having a truthful celebration of that. It's about valuing and holding all our children up.

I think it would be wonderful, really wonderful, if both Bills 13 and 14 passed, because I think they both are good; they both have their strengths. I think this would be a good time for some forgiveness on both sides. It would be a good time for those people who have associated themselves, hopefully wrongly, maybe out of some pressure, with the folks like Mr. McVety—wouldn't it be wonderful if there wasn't a single member of this Legislature out there present when he does his normal thing, "Gays and lesbians aren't fit to be parents. They shouldn't have children," and his whole—his web page is now called "Corrupting children."

It's hard for me, as a parent who struggled so hard to raise my child, and having to fight to get the right to do that; to take a child who was street-involved, who was sexually abused, who got involved in some pretty horrible things and some even more horrible things that adults did to him—I can't imagine—when someone talks about corrupting children, I can give you a long list of how people are corrupting a child. Loving, positive gay and lesbian and transgendered parents aren't part of the corrupting; they're part of the loving and caring.

I want to thank all of you today—and I want to particularly thank those of you who come from communities where this is hard; people like Maria Van Bommel, my friend Jeff, many of you who come from strong faith traditions where it's hard for people to understand why you would stand with people who have faced discrimination as so many people in our community have—for your courage.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I stand here today to speak about Bill 13.

Minister from Training, Colleges and Universities, as a mother, my heart goes out to you. But everything that you said today echoes what my son has said—you know, fears for all kids to be accepted.

The other night, my son and I and my family were sitting down, and we were speaking about Bill 13 and

Bill 14. My son was born with a vision problem, and he was out of school. Every one of us has situations with our children, people who we know. We were sitting there talking because I had to take him out of the school that he was at because he was beaten up so many times. I said to him, "Son, I'm going to take you out and I'm going to take you to another school, but at the end of the day, you're going to have to learn the tools to deal with people who treat you the way they treat you," because I didn't want him to become a victim.

But as I sit here today, I'm saddened because we all are God's children. When my son sits there and says to me, "Mom, why are you just talking about one thing when we're all discriminated? That's discrimination, when all of us feel the way we feel." I know for him, he's said many, many things that the minister spoke about, how he felt going to school and how he felt getting up every day going to school.

When I went to school one day to pick him up as he was coming out, a couple of the kids called him a few names that I won't speak of in here. I wondered to myself, how does he get up every day? I didn't have that situation growing up when I was a child. I was heartbroken because I thought, every day children get up, and every day as adults, we're bullied as well in certain circumstances. How do we function, and how does he function getting up?

I want everybody to be accepted. I want everybody to feel that they're okay and not to be in situations where they can't get out of bed. They feel that they need to be respected and loved and cared. Every single person deserves that.

I know for my son, my children and every person sitting in here, every one of us deserves to feel that we are somebody and that we are cared about. I know it goes on, and that's accepted, but it's not acceptable.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to follow the member from Toronto Centre, the minister, with a friendly amendment. He did not describe himself as an evangelical. I do, because evangelism means sharing the Good News. I wrote a book called Que(e)rying Evangelism that won the Lambden in Washington, DC. Charles McVety does not have proprietary onus on the word "evangelism." Evangelism means sharing the Good News. The Good News of Jesus was love. It was not judgment and it was not hatred. Christians do not hate.

When our church performed the first legalized marriage—we followed Brent in that regard—it was vetted by Thunder Bay, unlike his. But we were subjected to unbelievable torment from people from the States. I won't mention names and I won't say what they said. Our members were targeted. When our music director, who was a transperson, died, the outcry from the so-called Christian right was outrageous.

Forty years ago, when I was obviously only about four years old, I stood on Parliament Hill on We Demand. From those days to this day, some things didn't change enough, and the member from Toronto Centre pointed to those things.

We need to do so much more. It's just not enough anymore to condone any of the actions of those who pretend to be Christian—because they're not. That's what I'll say: They're not Christian. That's not the Jesus Christ whom we read about in scripture and that's not the Jesus who those of us who proudly carry that banner feel we follow. Again, he called us to love our neighbour. He did not define who that neighbour is. What Charles McVety and his crew do is not loving. He called us to judge not. What they are doing is judging, by any definition.

We need to finally move beyond that, to show them for who they are. It's not just a sect. It is not Christian, it is not evangelical, it is not right.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to thank the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for his remarks this morning, and sharing his personal challenges and journey with all of us. That took a lot of courage, Minister, and I want to say thank you. Not only are you passionate about this issue, but the fact that you have the courage, the leadership and the vision—because this is what this is all about. Leadership takes courage, and that was courageous this morning. So thank you for that.

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Bill 13 is the first step in what our government is trying to do to address the issue of protecting and supporting every student in our schools. As the first Chinese Canadian woman in this House, I could share with you too many challenges that the minister went through—the racist remarks and the phobic remarks attacking my own family in the 1970s, the 1980s, even the 1990s. So I certainly know that this proposed legislation is to prevent more bullying and to protect our students in our schools.

The proposed Accepting Schools Act is a key component of our government, to make all Ontario schools safe, healthy and inclusive learning environments so every student not only feels accepted but also feels safe—I cannot stress enough.

I don't know how many times, as a former school trustee, young people came to my office, and their parents, crying, begging me to do something. But there wasn't legislation. There weren't guidelines and policies. Yes, we have a very progressive school board in Toronto District School Board, but of course more can be done.

Our government and this province is recognized nationally and internationally, around the world, as having the best English-speaking schools in the world. We need to make sure every child is given an opportunity to learn, Mr. Speaker, and this is what the legislation is about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from York–Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: On the one hand, I feel I have a very short time to make any comments, and at the other end of that is the fact that it's difficult for people to—so I almost feel that this is too much time.

I want to talk for just a moment about the fact that we regard ourselves as a civil society. I know there's been a

great deal of discussion about our faith, and I'll deal with that in my case in a moment. I think as members of a Parliament, as members of a civil society, what we're really talking about is the question of tolerance. When you listen to those who are able to share individual stories, it's the fact that other people have not been able to tolerate and understand whatever kind of difference it is. As we can think back, as children we were probably bullied at some point. Actually, I dealt with mine in a way that today would have had me expelled. The point is that it's got to be the question—the mark of a civil society is its tolerance.

I listened very carefully and with a great deal of emotion to the minister's speech. I recall, as a teacher, a young student of mine who came in wearing a button that said "Gay and proud," and you can't imagine how much that took for him to be able to do that. It was like a beacon or a magnet. It certainly meant that he recognized his position and the importance of dealing with others. I was fortunate enough to be a confidante of his, actually, after he finished high school, and I can assure you that those issues that he had to deal with as a young gay man didn't go away, and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's very important.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, you have two minutes to reply.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank my friend for York–Simcoe. I just want to pick up on something you said. Tolerance is the foundation of this. It has to be there; otherwise, people aren't safe. But we need to move, quite frankly, past acceptance to celebration, because we have differences. To me, it's not just about being gay; it's the fact that the suicide rate is higher amongst gay and lesbian and transgendered youth than amongst any other subgroup. It's just the group that is most impacted.

When I was mayor of Winnipeg, I represented a heck of a lot of Mennonites, Sikhs. I was just talking to some of my colleagues who are going around in gurdwaras right now saying that the Liberal government is bringing forward a bill to teach people how to be homosexuals in school. Well, you couldn't get a more toxic kind of response about dividing one group of people, especially a community for whom maybe English is not their first language, who create these misconceptions—because it's hard to do that. That's what actually puts their children—because a lot of those Sikh kids have gay kids, and a lot of those Sikh kids are getting beaten up for wearing turbans or being marginalized in their own schools, and facing racism and religious intolerance.

My journey was a different one than my friend from York–Simcoe, but I just wanted to say that this has to be a respectful place for everybody. I never chose to make being gay the issue. When I went to be a parent, I didn't want to have a fight over being gay; someone else made it the issue. When I ran for office, I didn't make a big deal about being gay; someone else made it the issue.

I would have been quite happy—and what we're fighting for is nothing. I look forward to the day when it is completely inconsequential, boring, and people yawn when they find out you're gay. We're still not there yet.

I think anyone who has any kind of difference—a religion they believe in passionately, whatever it is—just wants to have a comfortable place and be able to contribute to society the way everyone else does.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I want to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for that very thoughtful and emotional response in furthering the debate on this issue.

I think I share with most people who listen to that the fact that you actually had to endure that. I don't think you actually can really understand what you had to go through unless you walk a mile in someone else's shoes. I think the minister today in his comments went a long way in telling members of this House and those who are watching this debate in these proceedings exactly what he has gone through in his life. I would share with him and I share with many members who commented on that discussion, Minister, that what you faced was deplorable. I want to say to you and to members of this House that I want to stand shoulder to shoulder with you with respect to fighting the kind of intolerance, to fighting the kind of hate that we have been seeing going on, particularly with this issue, but in society in general.

I think we have to make sure we're talking about this issue when we're talking about Bill 13, that we have to stay mission-focused. This bill is about our kids. It's about our kids being safe in our schools. It's about our kids going to school knowing full well that when they're there, they're going to be in an environment that's safe, that allows them to be the bright minds that we expect them to be: the future of this great province.

So I want to stand here today in my place as a member of the PC caucus to demonstrate my solidarity with that position, Mr. Speaker.

A few people, in the comments that we've seen over the last little while—one of the comments that I've heard on this issue has to do with, "Well, don't we have policies in place in our schools already that deal with bullying?" I think that the comment is an interesting one and one I think that deserves further elaboration.

You see, Mr. Speaker, I know that particularly when I was going to school, which wasn't too long ago—I was in high school during the 1990s; I'm sure they would like to elaborate on that a bit more. We on this side of the House came forth with a safe schools act. We talked about violence in our schools, something that we feel very strongly about.

Let me perhaps provide you with a definition of violence that comes from the World Health Organization: Violence is defined as "the intentional use of physical"—and psychological—"force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likeli-

hood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation."

I think, Mr. Speaker, a lot of people who have talked to this issue already have listed a number of examples where people have faced violence. I think it's very important for us to understand that we are dealing with violence, whether it's physical violence or whether it is violence of an indirect nature, whether it's by words or defacing property and so on and so forth.

One of the things that came out of the Safe Schools Act was a code of conduct. I want to point out three points. There were multiple points, but the three that I'd like to talk about today are sections 3, 4 and 5 in that code of conduct.

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Section 3 of that Safe Schools Act code of conduct is, "To maintain an environment where conflict and difference can be addressed in a manner characterized by respect and civility." I think if we live by those words, Mr. Speaker, it goes a long way in sort of alleviating some of the concerns that we've been raising in this House. This is already in legislation. Section 4 says, "To encourage the use of non-violent means to resolve conflict." Again, I think this is something that we like to talk about in both Bill 13 and Bill 14. Point number 5 of this code of conduct is, "To promote the safety of people in the schools." I think that is ultimately what we're tasked with, Mr. Speaker. We're here to try and come up with a robust, best-in-North-America anti-bullying bill. I think that's our goal, a goal we share on all sides of this House.

I think it speaks to a long-standing Conservative principle, which is that governments should intervene when something is happening that harms: where a person is harming another individual, a group is harming another individual, a group is harming another group or a group is marginalizing another group—the harm principle. The harm principle was first discussed by John Stuart Mill, who articulated the harm principle in his volume On Liberty. He states that "the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others."

Mr. Speaker, we stand committed to helping our kids go to school in a safe and nurturing environment. We produced policies when we were in government that effectively did that, and we're certainly very interested in seeing that discussion proceed.

So what is that difference between violence and bullying? What produces a reason for us to debate this issue in this Legislature today? Let me perhaps provide a few definitions of what bullying actually is. According to Peter Smith, who prepared this definition in a report to the OECD on bullying, it is "generally agreed that bullying is a subset of aggression: namely aggression that involves (i) repetition and (ii) imbalance of power." So you see, Mr. Speaker, it's a subset of violence, some of the things that we've talked about in previous legislation. It's talking about violence that's recurring, that's repetitive, and it speaks to an imbalance of power.

A few more definitions: In 1993, Farrington wrote, in volume 17 of Crime and Justice, "Bullying is repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person."

A 1994 book, School Bullying, by Smith and Sharp suggests that bullying is "the systematic abuse of power." Systematic abuse of power—it's not isolated; it's systematic and it's all-encompassing to that degree, Mr. Speaker.

A 2002 book by Rigby that tried to apply new perspectives on bullying said that bullying involves six criteria. It involves a desire to hurt. It involves a harmful action. It involves a power imbalance. It typically involves repetition. It involves an unjust use of power. It involves evident enjoyment—this is I think one of the most unfortunate parts of bullying—by the aggressor and generally a sense of being oppressed on the part of the victim. If there's anything that speaks to a call to action on this file, it is very much related to those words, of trying to eliminate, if we can, this enjoyment by the aggressor when they are victimizing people. I think this is something that's very important to suggest.

Now, the OECD report that I referenced talked about several different types of violence and bullying. There are six types. The first is a direct physical attack. The second is an indirect physical attack on belongings and property; we're talking about vandalism. The third is a direct verbal attack, so that's oral, or it might be a letter, might be a text message, might be an email or something you post online. There's an indirect verbal attack, which is the spreading of rumours. The fifth is a social exclusion from normal group activities; and finally, institutional aggression/manipulation, which is setting unrealistic goals by groups.

I realize I'm out of time, Mr. Speaker. I hope to resume this debate when we do that. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'd like to introduce and welcome Judy Nuttall to question period today. Judy's a great community activist and a huge children's advocate in Barrie. Welcome, Judy.

Hon. Margarett R. Best: Today I want to welcome Golf Road Junior Public School from the great riding of Scarborough–Guildwood to the Ontario Legislature. They are in the Legislature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'd like to introduce my wife, Janet MacLaren. She's here in the gallery. I brought her here today to prove I have a job here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll provide a Speaker's note to that effect.

Introduction of guests?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: I have the privilege of introducing Kashtin Fitzsimmons and Holly Easton to the House today, who are here to watch the proceedings during question period. Welcome.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to introduce to the Legislature this morning Mr. Jonathan Bosman. Jonathan is a regional facilitator for Gideons International in Canada.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It gives me great pleasure to introduce and welcome Fátima Mesquita from Brazil to the Legislature today. She's been a new Canadian for over nine years. Thank you for being here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I'm waiting for yet another guest, but his father is here: Jeryl Jaque from Mississauga South–Lakeview. His son will be arriving in short order. His name is Charles-Etienne Jaque. Welcome to the Legislature. I look forward to having lunch with you today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's try that again: The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. I have some very special guests to introduce today on behalf of page Alexander Ruddy, who is also the page captain today. I would like to introduce members of his family: Belva Cousens, John Cousens, Jane Cousens, Laura Cousens, Ethan Kerr, Jake Eadie, David Eadie, and of course I have a special guest, Don Cousens, a former assistant Speaker of the House and MPP from Markham from 1981 to 1994. Please welcome them all.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Mississauga–Streetsville did steal the Speaker's thunder, but let's make sure that this is official. The former member from Markham and York Centre in the 32nd, 33rd, 34th and 35th Parliaments is in the west gallery: Don Cousens. Welcome.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On Monday, March 26, 2012, the member from Cambridge, Mr. Leone, rose on a question of privilege concerning statements made by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in the course of her responses to oral questions in last Thursday's question period.

The responses in question dealt with the minister's ability to act during the election period on irregularities in the business practices and operations of the Ornge air ambulance service and with the role of her ministry on that file during the election period.

The member for Cambridge invited the Speaker to make a finding that the minister's statements amounted to a prima facie case of contempt on the basis that the minister deliberately misled the House. The government House leader, Mr. Milloy, and the member for Simcoe–Grey, Mr. Wilson, also spoke to the matter.

Having had an opportunity to review last Thursday's Hansard, the notice submitted by the member for Cambridge, the remarks of the members who spoke to the question of privilege, Tuesday's attempt by the minister to clarify her responses and the parliamentary authorities, I am now prepared to rule on the matter.

As noted by the member for Cambridge, McGee's Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand identifies what needs to be established for the Speaker to find a prima facie case of contempt based on a member deliberately misleading the House. Pages 653 and 654 of the third edition of this text states as follows:

"There are three elements to be established when it is alleged that a member is in contempt by reason of a statement that the member has made: The statement must, in fact, have been misleading; it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time the statement was made that it was incorrect; and, in making it, the member must have intended to mislead the House. The standard of proof demanded is the civil standard of proof on a balance of probabilities but, given the serious nature of the allegations, proof of a very high order. Recklessness in the use of words in debate, though reprehensible in itself, falls short of the standard required to hold a member responsible for deliberately misleading the House. The misleading of the House must not be concerned with a matter of such little or no consequence that is too trivial to warrant the House dealing with it. A misunderstanding of this nature should be cleared up on a point of order.

"For a misleading of the House to be deliberate, there must be something in the nature of the incorrect statement that indicates an intention to mislead. Remarks made off the cuff in debate can rarely fall into this category, nor can matters about which the member can be aware only in an official capacity. But where the member can be assumed to have personal knowledge of the stated facts and made the statement in a situation of some formality (for example, by way of personal explanation), a presumption of an intention to mislead the House will more readily arise."

Satisfying the criteria to find a prima facie case of contempt based on a deliberately misleading statement to the House is difficult to do and rarely achieved. As Speaker Carr indicated in his ruling at page 102 of the journals for June 17, 2002:

"The threshold for finding a prima facie case of contempt against a member of the Legislature, on the basis of deliberately misleading the House, is therefore set quite high and is very uncommon. It must involve a proved finding of an overt attempt to intentionally mislead the Legislature. In the absence of an admission from the member accused of the conduct, or of tangible confirmation of the conduct, independently proved, a Speaker must assume that no honourable members would engage in such behaviour or that, at most, inconsistent statements were the result of inadvertence or honest mistake."

In the case at hand, the minister indicated that she was standing for election during the election period and had not been sworn in, and that the ministry was operating in

a caretaker role, making it inappropriate for the ministry to share the Auditor General's draft report on Ornge with the minister during that period. She also indicated that "when a writ is dropped, the responsibility of the minister changes, and that the ministry is in charge of the operations."

In a response to a subsequent question, she indicated that she took action shortly after she was sworn in as minister in October 2011. Finally, the minister indicated as follows:

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"When the House is dissolved, when we are in that interim period between the writ dropping and the new cabinet being sworn in, there are limitations on the activities of ministers.... [W]hen I was sworn in as minister in October, after the election, I was made aware of the issues that were examined by the auditor and I became aware that the auditor was having trouble getting information from the people at Ornge, so I called the Auditor General and I asked him about that."

Let me now assess these remarks. First, I accept that during the election period, the caretaker convention acts as a restraint on some governmental activities. That being said, it is not for the Speaker to decide or rule on the ambit and application of the convention, because Speakers traditionally avoid delving into constitutional and legal matters better left to governments, courts and litigants. Even if I could look into such matters, the minister's remarks about the existence and the application of that convention in the case at hand stand uncontradicted and therefore do not satisfy the test set out in McGee's text.

This brings me to the minister's remarks to the effect that she was not sworn in during the election period, and that she was sworn in after the election. Many members, including myself, were surprised by these remarks. If the minister was referring to her not being resworn in as a minister until after the election, this does not detract from the fact that, based on her 2009 appointment as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, she would still have been in charge of her ministry during the election period. She would have been in charge because ministers normally retain their ministerial status during the election period so that the province is never without a government.

The brevity or the incompleteness of the minister's remarks on the matter of whether and when she was sworn in were unfortunate. She sought to rectify the confusion on Tuesday when she indicated that she had not intended to suggest that she was not the minister during the election period, or to suggest that she was not responsible for overseeing Ontario's health care system during that period.

The important point about last Thursday's remarks and Tuesday's clarification was that the minister did not concede, and no one has established, that she both made and intended to make a misleading or incorrect statement, or that she both made and intended to make irreconcilable statements to the House.

Moreover, it is not enough to say that, in the cut and thrust of question period, a minister's elaboration on, or clarification of, something the minister said earlier in question period points to a strategy of misleading the House. What we are left with, then, is a disagreement on the correct interpretation to be placed on the minister's words, and as to the nature and the application of the caretaker convention.

For the reasons I have indicated, the onerous threshold established by the parliamentary authorities on the subject of misleading statements has not been reached in the case at hand.

A prima facie case of contempt not having been established, I do thank the member from Cambridge for the very thoughtful submissions in his notice. I also thank him, the government House leader and the member from Simcoe–Grey for speaking to this matter.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: Speaker, in the days, weeks and months before the budget was tabled, we saw the signs that the government was going to back down—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Which minister is getting the question?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Sorry; I didn't say "To the Premier."

To the Premier: In the days, weeks and months before the budget was tabled, we saw the signs that this government was going to back down and avoid taking the measures that are necessary to turn Ontario's economy around and present a weak budget. They used the Drummond report to delay taking responsibility for their failed management of Ontario's finances, and then subsequently dismissed their own economist's recommendations for cutting government spending.

Speaker, the Premier spent another $2.5 billion he didn't have, and the Premier said that $214 billion in debt was "not that bad." Premier, just how deep does the debt have to go, how extensive does the deficit need to be, before your government finally stops your wasteful spending?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thank the honourable member for his question. Speaker, I have a concern—and I think it's shared by more and more Ontarians—that Her Majesty's loyal opposition keeps painting itself further and further into an ever-smaller corner of unreasonability.

Speaker, we introduced, just 48 hours ago, a budget of great significance. The budget documents themselves are 354 pages long. The budget bill itself is 355 pages long.

Former Premier and Finance Minister Ernie Eves said, "I think they made a step in the right direction. I don't think there's any doubt about that." Janet Ecker, former Ontario finance minister and president of the Toronto Financial Services Alliance, said, "We strongly support

their efforts to eliminate the deficit. It is an important step for Ontario's future economic growth...."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Speaker, two provinces released their budgets this past Tuesday. One province's deficit was down; the other province's deficit went up. One province is receiving $35 million less in equalization payments this year; the other province is receiving $1.1 billion more.

Given this government's track record and spending habits, it's not surprising that the province with the larger deficit and receiving more payments is Ontario. But I don't know if anyone has ever expected to see the day that New Brunswick was better off financially than we are. How did your government manage to put Ontario in a position where New Brunswick is reducing its deficit and receiving less in transfer payments while Ontario's deficit keeps going up and we're getting $1 billion more in transfer payments?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: A couple of things, Speaker. First of all, I want to draw to my honourable colleague's attention an important finding in the Drummond report. I forget exactly which page it appeared on, but he said specifically that in 2009, our relationship with the federal government cost the taxpayers of Ontario a net $12.3 billion. I'd recommend that to my honourable colleague.

But I want to get back to this point of the corner of unreasonability in which they continue to paint themselves. I have quotes here endorsing our budget from the Royal Bank of Canada, from TD Bank, from Scotiabank, from the Dominion Bond Rating Service, from BMO Nesbitt Burns, from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, from the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario, from the Ontario General Contractors Association, and a host of others.

Again, I say to my honourable colleague opposite, they have time to reconsider, Speaker. Nobody in the province of Ontario is looking for an election. We're looking for a way for all of us to work together and to move forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Premier, since you don't seem to want to face facts, I'll give you the answer; it's simple. Your out-of-control spending continues. Your own economist said spending increases have to be held to 0.8%. You failed to do that. Instead of cutting your spending, you're spending more than you did last year. You claim you will save $17.7 billion, but your additional spending adds up to $18 billion over five years. What is the Premier going to do, Speaker, to make up for this $18-billion hole?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, again, my honourable colleague is part of a political movement which has very, very little support in terms of their determination to cause an election within six months of the very last election.

I would bring to my honourable colleague's attention some of the measures in our budget which I think are going to be very important for them to consider. We reduce our spending by nearly $18 billion. We tackle compensation in a firm but fair way. They ask that we take into account wages. We're doing more than that. We're tackling both wages and benefits, and then we're going beyond that to deal with a very thorny issue, and that is the whole notion of public sector pensions.

Again, I say to my honourable colleagues opposite, don't marginalize yourselves. Be part of the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let's maintain momentum. Let's—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: Back to the Premier, Speaker. You know, there's only one person in this entire Legislature who, if an election should eventuate, is responsible, and that's Premier McGuinty.

Ontarians were counting on this government to take real action to turn Ontario around. Our party made a series of recommendations to reduce the government's spending, but they were all rejected. Instead, we see that the government will spend more, not less—billions more, in fact: Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, up; Ministry of Consumer Services, up; Ministry of Finance, up; Ministry of the Attorney General, up; 14 out of 24 ministries, up. Is it any wonder that when you finally get to the line item, "interest on debt," it's up?

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, it's become clear that the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Attorney General, come to order. Come to order.

The member from Nepean–Carleton, please do not ignore me when I say, "Come to order."

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sorry, Speaker, I didn't know it was you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Peterborough is not helping.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The party to the right of us says that we are not moving aggressively enough; the party to the left of us says that we are moving too aggressively. That tells us, Speaker, that we probably have it just about right.

We're holding our spending, over the course of the next three years, at 1%. The Drummond commission recommended that we hold our health care spending at 2.5%; we're bringing it in at 2.1%. In the past, we were spending around 6% in health on an annual basis.

We are doing everything, Speaker, from tackling compensation to reducing the office space used by our public

servants by one million square feet to reducing the number of workers in the OPS by some 4,900. It's a balanced and reasonable and thoughtful budget.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Speaker, the budget that this government presented on Tuesday shows that they just don't get it. As the old saying goes, "Denial is not a river in Egypt." This government doesn't want to comprehend just how deep a hole they've dug this province into.

Our province is in historic debt and a deficit that equals three times the total of every other province combined. Your answer to that is to spend $1.7 million per hour more than what we take in in revenue. Any reasonable person understands that to control debt, you have to rein in spending. You didn't do that; you decided to spend more instead. We'll go $1.75 million further into debt in this one hour of question period.

How much worse does it have to get before we finally see you take some responsible action and rein the spending in?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I say to my honourable colleague that the former leader of the Conservative Party, the former Premier of the province of Ontario, in fact, disagrees with him. Mr. Tory just yesterday said—another leader of their party, Speaker; I'm sure they'd be interested in this—"I hope there is no election. I think that would be a waste of time and money, given everything."

I say to my honourable colleagues in Her Majesty's official opposition that they give careful consideration as to whether or not the people of Ontario want to be plunged into another election within six months of the last one. If they are truly committed to strengthening our economy, if they're truly committed to a determined recovery, how is it that they think that a provincial election is going to contribute to that in any way, shape or form, Speaker? I ask them to consider that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I say again, Speaker, that any election is on him.

You have not reduced the deficit, sir, and you are not creating jobs. The 2011 deficit is $15 billion; the 2012 deficit is $15.3 billion. You have put Ontario on a disastrous path to a $30-billion deficit, and your broken promises will cost our province 30,000 jobs.

The Ontario PC Party cannot support a $30-billion deficit. We cannot support more debt. We cannot—and we will not—support a further 30,000 job losses.

How can you stand here today and pretend that this budget makes tough choices when the deficit is increasing, when spending is increasing and when debt is increasing?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I don't understand the 30,000 job losses. I think it's a matter of fiction.

Again, if they have a written plan, Speaker, if they have a written plan they're prepared to put forward, I'd like to see that. I want to repeat: The budget documents that we put out 48 hours ago are 350 pages; the budget bill itself is over 350 pages.

I say to my honourable colleague once again, I'd ask them to take the time to be reflective, to give some serious consideration to the substantive elements that we've introduced by means of this budget. It does protect health care, it does protect education, it does balance the budget and it does build a foundation for jobs and growth.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. New Democrats have asked Ontarians to join us in giving the budget some very serious consideration, and I want to share some of their thoughts.

Richard from London told us that the budget, "has done nothing to address the lack of jobs in Ontario. The lack of opportunity for young people in Ontario will have a lasting effect on the entire economy."

In the lead-up to the budget, I put forward some concrete plans to link tax relief to job creation and training.

What does the Premier say to people like Richard who want to see action on jobs in this budget?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the question. Jobs are a very big component of this budget. There is a southwestern Ontario economic development fund, which I would encourage my honourable colleague to support. We had some great news in the auto sector just yesterday with Toyota announcing 400 new jobs, Ford announcing 100 new jobs and General Motors announcing 300 new jobs. I'm pleased to say, Speaker, that in every instance, we have been partnering with those companies.

I remind my honourable colleague as well that an important dimension of this budget is our new jobs and prosperity fund. It will be some $2 billion. We look forward to working with the opposition to lend focus and strategic purpose to that to ensure that it is in fact creating new jobs and enhancing our productivity.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, New Democrats and Ontarians disagree; we watched 4,000 jobs leave this province last month.

David from Oshawa says this, Speaker: "As a young person (age 23) with a university education, I have been unable to find a well-paying job. I find that most jobs are low paying or part-time for young people like myself, and this budget does not address this key issue....

"I was hoping to see some sort of job creation measures in this budget and was sorely disappointed that it was not addressed."

This budget contained a lot of bad news for people, Speaker, particularly those people who are worried about jobs.

Is this Premier willing to consider changes that would actually give Ontarians like David some help and some hope?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We are open to reasonable amendments that do not compromise our three over-

arching goals. First of all, we must balance the budget in 2017-18. Secondly, we must protect health care and education. Thirdly, we must build a stronger foundation for new jobs and new growth.

There is no receptivity on this part over here on this side of the aisle for new spending. I must make that perfectly clear to my honourable colleagues opposite. We've worked long and hard to bring forward a budget that is responsible, that puts some specific restrictions on new spending.

So there's no room for new spending—I've got to make that clear—but if there's other things beyond those measures that help us meet our objectives, then we're more than open.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: James from North Bay wrote: "They should be using" Ontario Northland "as a strategic asset to grow the north and not sell it off for their bottom line. Doing this will cripple the north and have a much larger effect than the 1,000 ONTC jobs."

A job strategy should leverage our assets, like Ontario Northland, to create jobs all across Ontario.

In the lead-up to the budget, I put forward some concrete ideas to create prosperity and jobs in the north.

Is the Premier willing to consider changes that create jobs and give people like James some hope for the future?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We remain open; we will not back away from the decision we made with respect to ONTC.

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I will remind my honourable colleague that we're going to continue to invest over $30 billion in infrastructure over the course of the next three years. That will create, on average, 100,000 jobs every year. Our healthy homes renovation tax credit will create 10,500 jobs every year. Our OLG modernization plan will create some 6,000 new jobs. Our Ring of Fire development—we're talking about 1,500 permanent jobs there. The Pan Am athletes' village—some 5,200 jobs. And there's a lot more. In fact, building jobs and creating jobs is an important component of this budget.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. People are worried about jobs, but the state of our health care concerns them as well.

Martin from Toronto is worried about the impact of frozen budgets on our hospitals. He writes, "Health care is important to every one of us since we all have someone who at one time or another is benefiting from our health care system."

I've put forward some concrete ideas about changing our health care system to ensure that it's there for people who need it when they need it. Is the Premier ready to address the concerns of people like Martin?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I want to make it as clear as I can: We're open to positive, constructive proposals, but we're not open to new spending. We've got to balance that budget in 2017-18, we've got to protect health care and education and we've got to build a new foundation for jobs and growth. Those are the simple parameters. Those are the overarching goals. Those are the unwavering objectives that we will achieve and that we're absolutely committed to.

Beyond that, I tell my honourable colleague again that in fact we're increasing spending for health care—that's one of our priority areas—by 2.1%. We're going to do that in the smartest way possible. We want to begin to shift some of the increase in spending away from hospital-based care to community care, including home care. That's something that we committed to in the campaign, and I know that's something that my honourable colleague supports: more investment in more home care. I think we're increasing our home care budget by some 4%. That's a significant increase.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People who contacted us have expressed real concern about CEO salaries. This budget does nothing to curb outrageous CEO bonuses and lavish perks. It's a bitter pill for everyday Ontarians to swallow service cuts while CEOs get richer and richer and richer on the public dime.

Gavin from Point Edward writes this: "I was disappointed that there was no cap on CEO bonus[es] ... especially in the health field."

What does the Premier say to people like Gavin?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I say to my honourable colleague, I know that she's been very determined on this issue and consistent, and I commend her for that. But I'd ask her to consider what we've done in the budget. We'll freeze executive compensation for two more years, for a total of four years. We're requiring that the boards of directors benchmark their salaries internally against public sector comparables around the country. We also say that when it comes to bonusing and the like, that they abide by certain restrictions that we put in place.

Having said that, if my honourable colleague has other considerations that she'd like us to put forward, other considerations that do not cost Ontario taxpayers any money, then we're very open to considering those.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, I look forward to the government looking at public sector comparables, particularly in health care around the country. It's something that we advise.

Rebecca, a nurse from Sarnia, writes this: "I am really worried that the first cuts to be made to health care will be nurse layoffs. There is so much other waste in health care that it upsets me that we are often seen as a drain on the system and not an asset."

Carlo from eastern Ontario is blunter. He says the government is "trying to make the poor pay for the mistakes ... [like] Ornge and eHealth."

People see tough times ahead for our health system. Is the Premier ready to consider changes that will actually help build for our future for a healthy health care system?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That's exactly what we're doing. And as much as possible, we want to protect those jobs, because that's the way that we protect the quality of services for the people of Ontario.

You'll know, for example, Speaker, that one of the things that Don Drummond's commission has recommended is that we abandon full-day kindergarten. There are some 10,000 jobs that we would have lost doing that—and removing our cap from class sizes. He also recommended that we get rid of some 11,000 educational support workers. That's 20,000 jobs-plus. We said that we're not going to do that because that's going to compromise the quality of education that we deliver to our children.

We're going to bring the same perspective to health care as well. Our determination is to maintain jobs for our nurses so they can continue to provide great, quality service to our patients.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. After the Auditor General found that the government had ignored the warning signs at Ornge, your government House leader tried to blame this inaction on the opposition; and your Minister of Health blamed everyone and everything, from the provincial election to the charitable status of the organization.

Does the Premier agree that his government's response is irresponsible, unbecoming of his ministers or just plain sad?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Members will be interested to know that yesterday, the public accounts committee had a chance to question both the minister, the deputy minister and Mr. McKerlie, the acting head of Ornge, for over two and a half hours. It was an opportunity to start to ask some of the detailed questions that members have been asking back and forth. And those questions, Mr. Speaker—many of them have been about when briefings were received, when letters were received.

The only point that I'm making to my colleague from the New Democratic Party is that we had to hear for weeks and weeks about a letter that the minister received in January, and yet at the same time, the NDP forgot to tell us that they received a similar letter about two months earlier.

So I see the public accounts committee has a chance to clear the air on many of these issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am going to remind the minister that answers are to be about government policy and I'd like answers directed such. References to what the opposition is doing are not conventional.

Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Two years ago, members of this Legislature asked the right questions on Ornge, like why Chris Mazza's salary was hidden from the public record. But we received no response from the minister.

Here's what the Deputy Minister of Health said yesterday in that very same committee: "I think that what's clear is that … the ministry has not followed its own procedures."

Premier, why aren't you asking your minister, who didn't do her job, to resign?

Hon. John Milloy: I know the members of the committee will be anxious to speak about this. In December 2010, December 15, the leader of the New Democratic Party—and it was c.c.'d to the member from Nickel Belt—received a detailed letter about Ornge that they've never raised—no questions were raised. It talked about a number—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please.

I asked the minister not to make that reference. Talk about government policy, please.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, yesterday at public accounts there was an opportunity to talk to the Minister of Health, the deputy minister and Mr. McKerlie, the acting head of Ornge. I'm pleased to report my understanding is that public accounts will be sitting—it's now on Wednesdays that it sits. It will be sitting over the next number of weeks to continue to look into Ornge. I think all members would join with me in hoping that the discussion at the committee looks at a whole range of issues.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. Minister, the manufacturing sector in southwestern Ontario has felt the economic crush of the recession much deeper and longer than many other areas of the province. In my riding, many of my constituents once worked in the auto sector in many plants across the region.

Since the recession jobs have been harder to find, but my constituents and neighbours aren't giving up hope. Many of my constituents are thankful for the investments made by this government that have kept the auto industry afloat during the toughest of days.

Will the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation please tell this House about the state of the auto industry today and give reason for my constituents to keep their optimism alive?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Ontario is home to five of the world's top automakers. Within hours of our budget being released, three of those companies announced over 800 new jobs for Ontario workers in southwestern Ontario and the Niagara region.

Four hundred jobs will be added to the Toyota plant in Woodstock, where they'll build the highly successful RAV4. The investments we made with Toyota are certainly paying off.

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In Essex, Ford announced 100 new jobs and a third shift at their engine plant, where they produce motors for

the highly popular F-150 pickup truck. Ford said the announcement would not have been possible without the strong support and leadership of our Premier, Dalton McGuinty. And GM just announced 300 jobs at its new six-speed transmission line in St. Catharines.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario's auto sector is growing stronger and that's great news for our economy and great news for Ontario workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: I would agree with the minister. As a Liberal from Windsor, I'm proud to be part of a party that continues to stand behind our auto sector and create thousands of jobs in the process. It's particularly exciting news about the expansion at Ford; to the Minister of Environment's constituents about the GM transmission line; and I'm sure the member from Oxford would agree that the 400 jobs announced by Toyota will be welcome in his riding as well.

But it does concern me that the party opposite isn't in line with our investments in the auto sector. In fact, they've referred to them as corporate welfare and the picking of winners and losers. That's not very welcome language when talking about companies investing millions of dollars in our province.

Can the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation please inform this House why these investments are so critical to our job—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Ontario's auto sector employs nearly 485,000 people and contributes at least $20 billion to our economy. The auto industry's now bouncing back, and that's great news for Ontario workers in southwestern Ontario and right across the province.

The investments the McGuinty government made in support of the auto sector during the heat of the recession helped save those 485,000 jobs. The Institute for Research on Public Policy called our auto sector investments a "smart one-time move" that saved the government billions of dollars in the long run.

I'm glad, Mr. Speaker, that we chose to ignore the advice of the Leader of the Opposition and the PC Party, who did not support those critical investments. I'm sure Ontario workers are glad it was us calling the shots on those investment decisions and not the PC Party.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday at the public accounts committee, the deputy minister insisted that there's nothing in the auditor's report to indicate that a life was put at risk due to delayed or cancelled emergency aircraft. However, on page 38 of the auditor's report, the auditor states, "We found that Ornge internally reported 20 'significant patient adverse events' in 2009-10 to its board of directors, including some that"—unfortunately—"involved patient deaths."

It is troubling that the individual the Premier has asked to oversee fixing Ornge could have missed such critical information. Does the Premier now recognize the need for a select committee on Ornge to hear from front-line staff and fix the problem?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, to the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: As I mentioned in my previous answer, I think members will be pleased that the public accounts committee has had an opportunity to begin their hearings. They began yesterday with a session with the Auditor General and yesterday afternoon the minister, the deputy minister and Mr. McKerlie, the acting chief of Ornge, were able to be there. They talked at public accounts of the action that the minister took when she learned of wrongdoing. She of course, Mr. Speaker, called in forensic auditors, called in the police. She replaced the board, the CEO. Mr. McKerlie's now the acting chief. She replaced the performance agreement and she introduced tough new legislation.

In terms of committee hearings, Mr. Speaker, public accounts will continue to look into this. My understanding is there's a robust list of witnesses—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would again take the question to the Premier. It was, I will tell you, very troubling yesterday to hear the deputy minister say that no lives had been put at risk or was there any cause for concern about patient safety. So I think if we're going to restore public confidence, which has now been shattered by the minister and the government that ignored problems at Ornge for many years and were brought to our attention by front-line staff, we believe it's critical that we have a forum where these individuals could speak freely, without fear of reprisals or threats of lawsuits.

I ask the Premier today: Will he appoint a select committee and will he demand that the health minister resign?

Hon. John Milloy: With the greatest respect to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, I think she is doing a disservice to the public accounts committee of this Legislature. The public accounts committee is a committee traditionally, as it is in this case, chaired by the opposition. It has members from all parties who have come together to agree to look into the Ornge situation. Mr. Speaker, the public accounts committee has all the powers of a legislative committee in terms of calling witnesses and in terms of calling for papers.

I would also point out that at the public accounts committee, witnesses that appear in front of it enjoy the type of privileges and immunities of witnesses appearing before all public committees, standing committees, of this House. I know, Mr. Speaker, the member would in no way want to suggest that the witnesses that will be appearing do not enjoy those privileges.

Mr. Speaker, the public accounts committee is the forum to look into Ornge and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member for Nickel Belt.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^me^ France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. In March 2010, two years ago, New Democrats filed a freedom-of-information request asking why Mr. Chris Mazza's salary was being hidden from the public. The response we received—and that was confirmed yesterday at public accounts—said that 32 records were found, but none were shared with us. Then, in November 2010, we asked again, during estimates, why were the executive salaries at Ornge hidden? The response, Mr. Speaker, was filed yesterday while we were in committee.

Can the Premier explain why his health ministry only requested to see the salaries in December 2011?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, to the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite, who was of course in the committee yesterday looking at issues related to Ornge. I was very pleased to appear before that committee, Speaker.

Here are the facts: Within eight weeks of my becoming aware of the draft Auditor General's report, I had a forensic audit team on the ground at Ornge going through every piece of paper at Ornge. Within three weeks following that, a new interim CEO, Mr. Ron McKerlie, was in place. Two weeks after that, a new board, a very high-calibre new board, was in place. The new leadership team has taken significant action to focus on issues around patient safety.

I was at Ornge this morning, Speaker. I spoke to the front-line workers and I also spoke to the board, and I'm happy to talk more about that in the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^me^ France Gélinas: Well, the minister kept increasing the budget of Ornge year after year, without asking them to disclose any salary paid to their top executives. The government is looking to blame a faulty performance agreement, but not only did they already have the possibility to look at Ornge's books, this agreement was modified several times since 2005.

Was the reason that no one asked about the executive salaries at Ornge because high pay for CEOs and well-connected insiders is the norm with this ministry and this government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I completely reject the insinuation of the member opposite. The Attorney General has acknowledged that we have taken substantive, concrete action when it comes to Ornge. He has described the changes at Ornge as a sea change. The member from Newmarket–Aurora, not the greatest champion of the folks at Ornge, has acknowledged that the ministry intervened very aggressively.

This morning at Ornge, I spoke to front-line staff who are delighted with the changes that have happened at Ornge, Speaker. I met with the new board, where they reiterated their top priority under the leadership of Dr. Barry McLellan, the issues of patient safety. They are winding down the for-profits; some have already been wound down. Things are changing at Ornge, and the people of this province are the beneficiaries of that change.

1120

INFRASTRUCTURE
PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Mario Sergio: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Minister, I was pleased to see in Tuesday's budget that although there will be some modest decreases in infrastructure spending over the next six years, the government will continue to maintain a very robust public infrastructure investment program. I'm pleased because we have seen that properly leveraged, healthy investments in infrastructure create jobs in communities like mine and across Ontario.

The new engineering and science building at York University is a great example of a great project that will likewise generate a lasting economic and social benefit as we educate the next generation of Ontario engineers and scientists in my riding of York West.

Minister—through you, Speaker—can you share the long-term outlook, how it is for further investment in building job-creating—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I want to thank the member for raising an important question. The fact is, there were some very difficult decisions to make. Yes, there is some reprofiling of some future projects, but the member is absolutely right: We are retaining an exceptionally robust infrastructure program, with $12.9 billion on the table for the coming year and more than $35 billion over the next three years. To put that in perspective, those investments will create and preserve over 100,000 Ontario jobs in each of the next three years.

The member mentioned York University, a great example where upwards of 1,200 jobs in the construction trades are being created as a result of this investment.

So the longer-term outlook is very positive, both for jobs and continued investment in building stronger communities. A robust infrastructure program, Speaker, creates jobs, but every dollar—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Minister, thank you. I've heard from many people in the building community who believe that the budget reflected the right choices and the right priorities for Ontario as we eliminate the deficit, protect our gains in health care and education and create jobs. These are people who collectively invest billions in our economy and employ thousands of Ontarians.

They likewise find the position and priorities of the Leader of the Opposition recently rather troubling. They cannot understand why the PC Party would make the choice to oppose the budget before they had even read it.

Again, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, when it comes to making responsible job-creation investments in infrastructure, will the minister continue to seek the advice of the people who actually work in that sector, people whose jobs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. We already listened to the infrastructure business sectors, and they have applauded our budget.

I'm proud of the major projects that we are moving forward with, which unfortunately the PC Party has decided to vote against. Many of these projects are in their very own communities.

In Simcoe North, we are going to continue moving forward with the Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care in Penetanguishene. In Durham and Oshawa, we are going to continue moving forward with the 407 east extension, which is going to create about 13,000 jobs, Speaker, most of them local. In Whitby–Oshawa, we are going to continue moving forward with widening Highway 7. In Kitchener–Waterloo, we will move forward with the new Global Innovation Exchange for business and mathematics at Wilfrid Laurier University.

It's just disappointing, Mr. Speaker, that we will be creating jobs in those ridings held by PC members who will vote to kill those jobs.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, to the Premier: Yesterday at the public accounts committee, the Minister of Health indicated that because Ornge is a federally regulated charity, it's off limits to her oversight. So, now that she has declared federally regulated charities off limits to the provincial government, does that mean WSIB can't go in and audit them to ensure proper deductions are being made, or the Ontario Securities Commission can't ensure that investments comply with Ministry of Finance guidelines? Is the Ministry of Revenue restricted from auditing Ornge to ensure OHIP deductions are being properly made?

Do you really expect people to believe your lame excuse that you had no oversight abilities for Ornge because it was a federally regulated charity?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Now, I am no lawyer, Speaker, but I have received advice from legal counsel on this issue. The member opposite should know that what we're talking about is the incorporation status. We're not talking about registered charities; we're talking about where the incorporation of the entity is. We are changing that. We are changing the performance agreement, we have changed the performance agreement, and we—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're getting into the yelling again.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we took decisive action. One of the pieces—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Northumberland, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —to recall is to change the incorporation status from a federally incorporated organization to something under the Ontario—as an Ontario-registered incorporated organization.

What is important to the people of this province is that we are bringing far more transparency and oversight. I will be able—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, this Minister of Health's excuse she could do nothing about Ornge because it is a federally regulated charity is pathetic. It is particularly so because in the next breath, she tries to take credit for intervening at Ornge.

For weeks, she has been saying she should not be fired because she took action to get the board to resign. Just yesterday, we learned that she had done nothing to get the board to resign. The deputy minister told public accounts, "The board agreed to resign on their own volition." The minister is starting to get quite a track record of inaccurate things she is telling this House. How is it—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would caution the member of trying to say something that you can't say as unparliamentary language, and I ask him to be cautious of that, please.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you for the caution.

How is it that even the board at Ornge had the integrity to know when to throw in the towel and resign, but you don't?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, my job as the Minister of Health is to fix the problems as they arise, and I have done exactly that.

We are moving forward with important changes at Ornge. With the new legislation, if it passes, we will be able to send in a supervisor as soon as the public interest, we feel, is threatened. Under the new performance agreement and under the new legislation, we will have much stricter oversight of Ornge. There will be much higher transparency and, most importantly, we will have a rigorous quality improvement and quality reporting system.

We are making the changes at Ornge. I wish the member opposite would support us as we make these changes.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Premier. In the middle of a province-wide social assistance review, the McGuinty government has unilaterally decided to delay the rollout of the Ontario child benefit, to freeze social assistance rates and to cut funding for emergency home repairs for people most vulnerable on social assistance. Why is this government undermining its own social

assistance review process by unilaterally imposing these changes?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the question and the opportunity to speak to this very important issue. As I said a number of times, we've worked really hard to put together a budget that reflects the values of Ontarians, and Ontarians want to do what they can to help children who are growing up in poor families. That's why we created the Ontario child benefit in the first instance. It's the only benefit of its kind in the country, I am very proud to say. In 2007, when we began, it was $250 on an annual basis; today it's almost $100 every month.

Our commitment is to increase it to $1,310. We decided that we can't afford to do it all at once, so we're going to increase it by $100 next year and $100 the year after that. I think that's fair, it's balanced, it's responsible, and it's reflective of our continuing commitment as a society to build a caring society.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again to the Premier: The Premier will know that under his watch over the last eight years, poverty rates have soared in this province. But we're hearing from hundreds of people across Ontario who are concerned about this government making it harder for people, so let's listen to their voices.

These are some of their stories: Mazen from Mississauga asks why the Ontario government is "targeting the poor." Andrea from London says, "Welfare and child benefits are essential for supporting vulnerable populations."

Can the Premier explain—not to us, Mr. Speaker, but to Mazen and Andrea—why his government is making it harder for families to afford nutritious food or a decent place to live?

1130

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you for the question. I'm happy to speak to it. I have to disagree, of course, with the member opposite. Perhaps she wasn't listening to the answer that I gave yesterday, where it indicated that in the first year of our poverty reduction strategy, we actually lifted 20,000 children out of poverty.

I'm going to quote an organization that she knows well, an organization called the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction. In the annual report this government released last December, that organization said: "The first lesson to be learned is that a government commitment matched by good policy can make a big difference in people's lives....

"In Ontario, child poverty actually fell between 2008 and 2009, inching down from" 15% to 14%.

"In Alberta, for example, child poverty soared by 25 per cent in the same period. What's the difference? Ontario took concrete action to reduce child poverty." That was from the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Speaker, as an Ontarian and as a Liberal I'm really proud that Ontario leads the OECD when it comes to post-secondary attainment. This is because of the hard work and investment that the Liberal government has put in, in the last eight years, to make our post-secondary education of the highest quality, to make it accessible and to make it affordable.

But there are people now saying that because these are tough times, maybe we should hold back a little. I disagree with that, Mr. Speaker, because I think the single most important thing we can do for our youth today is to continue to invest in post-secondary education so that we can all have a prosperous Ontario for generations to come.

Can the minister tell me what he's planning to do to ensure that low- to middle-income families can continue to have—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank my friend for the question. Our government is trying to address a serious challenge. Many middle-class and low-income families right now have two, three, sometimes four young people graduating from high school, entering colleges or universities or the trades. This puts an enormous stress on that.

In the last election, Premier McGuinty, listening to people, and my predecessor, the member for Kitchener, developed an idea which I think has been a very responsive and precise one, which is to offer students within four years of high school 30% off their tuition. Part of the reason is we had 90,000 more students come into our colleges and universities last year—more than in the double cohort. This has been a phenomenal program for our students.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Minister, as you know, my riding has Sheridan College; it's a state-of-the-art college, and I'm delighted and really privileged to have that in my riding. As a result, I try to stay in touch with students and meet with student groups. One such group was the Ontario undergraduate students' association. They expressed to me their concerns: "What happens if tuition goes up? What happens to the 30% tuition grant? Will it be indexed?"

Can the minister please tell this House what his plans are to make sure that the 30% grant continues to be affordable if tuition goes up?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: In introducing the budget, the Minister of Finance made the point that education is an incredible priority for this government. Mr. Speaker, this budget—my friend from Mississauga East–Cooksville will know, and I know is a big supporter of—will do two things: One, it will see an average 10% increase in student aid funding over the next three years, keeping

with our commitment to make sure that 70% of Ontarians have it; and, under the leadership of the Premier, we will be indexing this grant as well, so that it will always hold its real value for people. That means that the grant will not fall behind as tuition goes up. I think these are extraordinary commitments to the people of Ontario.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Todd Smith: The message today is for the Premier. I was reading the headlines and experts all over the place are panning the budget as much to-do about nothing.

Here's one from the Financial Post: "Timid, Not Tough." In the article, Ontarians are told that there's going to be another 30,000 job losses as a result of this budget.

Premier, in your budget, you raise taxes on big employers, you raise taxes on small employers, you raise taxes on drivers. You're very thorough about raising taxes. That's what you do.

Premier, since you chose not to give us a jobs plan in your road map to ruin that you laughingly call an austerity budget, can you tell us why you're taxing the only job creators in the province right now, small businesses?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Based on the member's question, it's clear we have a lot more to do on literacy and numeracy in our schools. In fact, the budget has been well received by a variety of authorities and experts around the country.

This budget moves to protect the gains we've made in health care and education as we move back to balance. I welcome the endorsation of people like Ernie Eves. I welcome the comments of Janet Ecker. I welcome the comments of a variety of others—accountants, economists.

These are difficult decisions. They're the right decisions. It's a strong plan for a better future for all of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: This minister obviously should be going back for a little brush-up on math education when you look at this budget.

Interjection: The old victory lap.

Mr. Todd Smith: The victory lap still exists, that's for sure.

Premier, you can hide behind this finance minister all you want, but you're going to wear the blame for this economy. You're to blame for this economy. You're to blame for the debt that's rising after this so-called austerity budget. You're to blame for tax increases on corporations. You're to blame for tax increases on small business. You're to blame for single-handedly putting 30,000 more Ontarians out of work. And you're to blame, Mr. Premier, for making this province a have-not province in Canada.

Will you at least show some courage, sir? Will you admit to businesses that the chief accomplishment of your budget is to drive more jobs to the western provinces, where at least the Premiers are competent?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I might refer the member opposite to the Globe and Mail today and their lead editorial talking about how he and his leader, Mr. Hudak, have been digging in dismissively and unnecessarily in trying to force an election.

Mr. Speaker, that is irresponsible. We haven't seen any ideas from that party. Even in this morning's Toronto Sun, I noted that a very highly regarded columnist with the Toronto Sun, Christina Blizzard, noted, referring to the Conservative Party and Mr. Hudak, "If he votes against this budget, he votes against tough measures he's been asking for."

You know, they're trying to have it both ways. This budget is a strong plan, it's the right plan and it's the appropriate plan for a better future for all—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

NORTHERN TRANSPORTATION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Premier. On January 27, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines opened a brand new bus depot in Sudbury. He said at this event, "I am pleased that that this modern, new bus depot location will help provide better service for users of Ontario Northland in Sudbury."

We fully agree with the commission's decision to build a new bus depot. We fully agree; it was the right decision. Our question is, why did you turn your back on the ONTC a month, a month and a half after it opened this depot?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: We didn't turn our back on anyone or anything. What we are going to be building is a modern transportation system for northeastern Ontario, one that will meet the present needs and the future needs.

This was a difficult decision, because we know that there's going to be some impact on some workers. We want that impact to be as minimal as possible. We look forward to everyone's help at ensuring that we provide that system with the minimal negative impact on the people who work at the ONTC.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you, Speaker. The ONR employs 1,000 people, men and women in northern Ontario. It operates eight stations and works with 60 agencies throughout the province. The last time we heard about ONTC pulling out and that privatization was going to take over was with the aircraft, and we don't have aircraft service anymore. We're afraid we're not going to get any service at all anymore.

So why on earth did the government open a brand new passenger terminal weeks before this announcement, and why are they now announcing a garage sale of the ONTC?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: The reality is that that bus terminal is a leased facility. ONTC does not own that facility. I want to make sure that the member understands that.

At the end of the day, what we want in place is a sustainable transportation model in northeastern Ontario. We see that as helping to build the economy of northern Ontario. If you have a transportation model that's not sustainable, how can that be a positive influence in affecting economic opportunity in northern Ontario? So as we move forward, with the help of everyone in northern Ontario, we will devise that model that is best and that will meet the needs of the present and the future opportunities—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: —northern Ontario.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, on Saturday, March 30, from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., people across this province and around the world will turn off their lights for Earth Hour, an initiative to show public support for taking action on climate change. I know that in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, families throughout the community will be turning off their lights to mark this historical event and show their support to tackle climate change.

Speaker, through you, would the minister explain to the House the significance of Earth Hour and what our government is doing to participate in this important event?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to thank the member for a very serious question.

Earth Hour is an initiative spearheaded by the World Wildlife Fund as a call to action on climate change. Individuals, businesses and organizations will turn off lights for one hour, delivering a powerful message that everyone can make a difference in climate change. Everyone can take part in Earth Hour. Just one hour symbolizes the difference we can make in our climate change.

Last year, 63 buildings owned by the government of Ontario, along with individual Ontario public service employees, joined 4,616 cities across 128 countries, over seven continents, in this gesture to promote energy conservation. This year I'm pleased to announce that over 70 buildings owned by the government of Ontario will be participating.

On Saturday, March 26, from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., I encourage all of my colleagues to join the Ontario public service and millions of individuals in this most important gesture.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Minister. While it is important for people to turn off their lights during Earth Hour, it is also important for them to turn off lights that are not used each and every day. Turning off the lights is an important method of electricity conservation in Ontario. I know that in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, my residents, especially the young people, are embracing electricity conservation and are trying their best to reduce their consumption, saving electricity.

Minister, people are concerned about the impact of conservation on their bottom line. Minister, can you please tell the House what conservation is doing to reduce Ontarians' electricity bills?

Hon. James J. Bradley: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you, and that's right: Earth Hour—the member is absolutely right. Earth Hour is Saturday, 8:30 to 9:30. Save energy, but also save money.

A couple of easy ways: You know, if you change 10 light bulbs and put in those energy-efficient ones—we've got saveONenergy coupons for those—$50 a year, you save. Power bars: a power bar with a little timer is $6 a year. But here's my favourite: If you turn off the air conditioner for up to six hours a day—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please, please.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm just trying to save the member from Renfrew some money. He might like to know it.

Turn off the air conditioner for up to six hours a day during the summer while you're not around: $90 savings. I think we can all use that for the things we most appreciate.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Toronto–Danforth on a point of order.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to note students here today from Centennial College and Collège Boréal visiting the Legislature. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome them. It's not a point of order, but we welcome them and warn them against learning something from the gallery at the press level, or something to that effect. But thank you.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment on a point of order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I want to correct the record: It was Saturday, March 31, from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member does have a point of order. You can correct your record.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do want to make one observation for all of us today. I would again remind us that we don't want to engage in a shouting match when it comes to heckling. I would recommend that we all consider each other's questions and answers.

What I've noticed, and I'm hoping we can get past it, is that when the question is being asked, sometimes the members from the same party are making noises while the question is being asked, and—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I am serious. I'm trying to make a point here.

And when the answers are being made, the same members of the same party are heckling. I'm asking you to use your own reserve, use your own self to gauge what it's like in here. It's not me; it's you guys, and I'm hoping that we stick to that.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1300.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to correct my record. Earlier this morning in question period I mentioned Earth Day as March 30. It actually should say "March 31." Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. That is a point of order. Members are allowed to correct their record.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to introduce two very good friends to the assembly today. They're seated in the west gallery: Merle Bowes from Lanark county and Gary Kelly from beautiful downtown Deloro.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CONSTITUTION OF CANADA

Mr. Randy Hillier: Today is an interesting and significant day in the constitutional history of Canada. By happenchance both the British North America Act, 1867, and the Canada Act, 1982, received royal assent on March 29.

Today, March 29, is the 145th anniversary of the royal assent of the British North America Act and the 30th anniversary of the Canada Act.

Unfortunately, however, many Canadians are uninformed when it comes to our Constitution and our history. As such, the Canadian Constitution Foundation has set up an innovative project with a fantastic website to help educate Canadians about our Constitution, on everything from the division of provincial and federal powers to the rights that are actually in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I personally believe that this is a very worthwhile effort which deserves the utmost support and recognition of this Legislature.

Today I will be tabling a bill to commemorate and proclaim the 29th of March as Constitution Day here in the province of Ontario.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: Algoma–Manitoulin consists of several rural communities. Constituents depend on small family-run businesses to provide the services of ServiceOntario. In previous years, ServiceOntario has given incentive to businesses in rural communities by providing them with a stipend—because they know that without these top-ups, it would be impossible to otherwise break even.

Now, ServiceOntario has notified them that this stipend will be discontinued, leaving most of these providers unable to cover their costs, therefore forcing them into difficult decisions, imminent closures and services lost for northerners.

Northern rural communities in Algoma–Manitoulin will never have the same demand as a larger town or city, but this doesn't mean that they don't deserve the same services.

I have spoken to our critic for government services, Paul Miller, MPP for Stoney Creek, who has also highlighted these concerns to the ministry. I have been in weekly contact with these service providers in my riding, some of whom have met with representatives from ServiceOntario. When they asked if this issue of the stipend would be revisited, they were told no.

As an MPP representing northern communities, I have witnessed how this government is denying rural Ontarians access to services they need. We are concerned about the overall direction this government is taking with ServiceOntario.

I am highlighting these issues because I strongly believe that wherever you live in this great province, you should receive the same services as everyone else.

CANADIAN AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise in the House today to acknowledge and support an important part of our shared Canadian heritage.

Many of my constituents have been calling my office with concerns regarding the closure of the Canadian Air and Space Museum located at Downsview Park. I also share their concerns and strongly believe that this important part of Canada's aircraft industry cannot be discarded.

A prolonged battle between the non-profit organization that runs the museum and its landlords, the federal crown corporation of Downsview Park, has resulted in a situation where the collection of artifacts is in danger—artifacts such as World War II bombers, Royal Air Force biplanes from the 1930s and a full-scale replica of the legendary Avro Arrow, which is a milestone of Canadian technical achievement.

Under current plans, the site is slated to become an ice rink. The hangar, which houses the museum, is part of

history itself, built in 1929 as home to de Havilland Canada, one of Canada's most successful aircraft manufacturers.

All Canadians should have access to our history; it is an important part of nation-building. This collection should continue to be available to the public, for our generation and future generations to come.

ROTARY PLACE

Mr. Rod Jackson: Today, it's my pleasure to honour an initiative that will serve many people from our community and surrounding area. Rotary Place at Royal Victoria Hospital officially opened its doors this month on March 19. Currently, this building houses a family teaching unit connected to the University of Toronto. Part of the building also includes Rotary House, a residential lodge for patients with cancer who are travelling for care. This lodge will serve up to 40 people in 20 rooms and will open at the same time as the new RVH cancer care centre.

This long-overdue facility was made possible only by the incredible effort and commitment of people in our community. David Blenkarn, the chair of the I Believe campaign, and Stewart McBoyle, the chair of the service club division, and the three Rotary clubs in Barrie spearheaded Rotary Place.

To paraphrase Eric Dean, the foundation chair at RVH, what makes this initiative unique is the degree of support from the 12 Rotary clubs in the Simcoe and Muskoka area. In total, these commendable clubs contributed over $1.5 million to make Rotary Place possible.

Rotary Place is a true example of what it means to be a community and what it means to be from Barrie. I appreciate their efforts to make our community what it is.

ALICE HEAP

Mr. Rosario Marchese: This afternoon, I would like to remember Alice Heap, the social justice advocate and activist who left us late last week.

Alice was the life partner and wife of Don Heap, the former Toronto alderman, city councillor and MP for Trinity–Spadina.

She worked tirelessly on poverty issues, social housing and justice. She fought against racism, and advocated for refugees and for those without a voice. She reminded us that we, as individuals, can always contribute, work alongside those who need our support and, together, do better.

Alice was selfless, always sharing her time, her skills and her resources with the people and issues she cared about. Most importantly, Alice was our friend, and the moments we shared together will accompany us always.

ABORIGINAL FAMILY FESTIVAL

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to rise and note a wonderful milestone for a great event that takes place in my riding of Ottawa Centre. The 15th annual Aboriginal Family Festival is taking place this Saturday and Sunday at Carleton University's Ravens' Nest gym.

I'm very privileged to live in Ottawa, which is located on Algonquin territory. Because of that, this event has grown so remarkably in these 15 years. It started in the Odawa friendship centre's own small gym years ago and has since grown into Carleton University's Ravens' Nest, a truly enormous space that shows just how well attended and important this festival is to my community.

The festival is truly youth-focused, and young people are encouraged to be involved not only in the dancing and drumming but to be involved and active in their aboriginal culture and tradition—a tradition and way of life that is so important to cherish and honour. I think it is wonderful that many of the young people who have grown up attending this event in the 15 years since its beginning continue to participate as adults, parents and mentors.

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The festival is organized by a committee of organizations and agencies in Ottawa, and I would like to recognize them for their excellent work in organizing this event, as well as all the volunteers and community members who make it a success: the Odawa Native Friendship Centre family program, the Makonsag Aboriginal Head Start program, Minwashin Lodge's Sacred Child program, the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, the Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy, Gignul housing, the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa and the Carleton University Centre for Aboriginal Culture and Education. Meegwetch.

LONDON LIGHTNING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: A very important announcement here: In front of 5,106 fans at the John Labatt Centre, the London Lightning beat out the Halifax Rainmen 116-92 in game 5 in an exciting final showdown to become the first NBL Canadian champions. NBL Canada is an exciting new chapter in the country's basketball history.

In their first season, the Lightning had a record of 28 wins with only eight losses. The team ranked number one in scoring defence per game, number one in turnover margin and number one in scoring margin. Gabe Freeman led the team in scoring, averaging 18 points per game.

We all know that basketball is a Canadian sport and was invented by Dr. James Naismith. It is a fast-growing sport in Canada. Over 600,000 Canadians ages 15 and older play the game regularly.

I want to congratulate the team, coach Michael Ray Richardson and Canadian players Mike King and London-born Pat Sewell.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: Nearly two and a half years after the global recession hit its lowest mark, many of the

world's leading economies have not recovered all their recession job losses.

Neither the United States nor Great Britain has as many people employed today as they did before the recession, but Ontario has recovered all of its job losses.

Since the bottom of the global recession in 2009, more than 300,000 new jobs—the majority high-value, full-time jobs—have been created in Ontario. More people are working in Ontario now than before the recession, and that has happened even as Ontario's largest customer by far, the United States, continues to struggle.

Ontarians have shown the entrepreneurial drive, the willingness to take risks and the desire to invest in their own skills that has always seen our province emerge from a recession stronger than we were when that recession started.

Ontario did not do what our opponents would do: either freeze within the status quo or slash health care and education indiscriminately. This 2012 Ontario budget has faced Ontario's issues, laid out a workable plan back to balance, and made the tough decisions to keep Ontario as Canada's economic and business leader.

SKILLED TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Ontario's business owners and workers are justifiably concerned about this Liberal government's plan to kill thousands of construction jobs in our province through the now infamous Ontario College of Trades, an organization designed solely to serve the interests of Dalton McGuinty's big-union friends and the Working Families Coalition.

Just recently, the Construction Sector Council produced its annual labour market forecast, citing the need for more than 60,000 new construction tradespeople in Ontario over the next eight years. You would think that this would be a good-news story for Ontario, and yet the Ontario Construction Employers Coalition has publicly stated its belief that "the college will advance an agenda of broad-based compulsory certification for Ontario's construction trades, which will stifle job creation at a time when our province needs more jobs, not less."

How can it be that, at a time when job creators in our province are demanding more skilled tradespeople to meet growing demand, the McGuinty government and its secretive College of Trades remain determined to slam the door on new jobs and new opportunities for Ontario workers? Ontario workers and job creators deserve much better.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a point of order.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Speaker, on a point of order: I just wanted to welcome my mom to the chamber. She's here to check up on me and make sure I'm behaving myself. So, welcome my mom.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mom, I can assure you that he does behave.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Ouellette assumes ballot item number 31 and Mr. Wilson assumes ballot item number 55.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CONSTITUTION DAY ACT, 2012
LOI DE 2012 SUR LE JOUR DE LA CONSTITUTION

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 57, An Act to proclaim Constitution Day / Projet de loi 57, Loi proclamant le Jour de la Constitution.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. This bill proclaims March 29 in each year as Constitution Day. As many of the members will know, the British North America Act in 1867 was the act that created modern-day Canada, the Dominion of Canada, and it received royal assent on March 29, 1867. In 1982, the Canada Act was Canada's final step in becoming a truly independent, democratic country, and once again, the Canada Act received royal assent on March 29, 1982.

I do hope and encourage all members of this House to recognize the importance of this date and to create the public awareness within our province on the importance of the Constitution.

ORGAN OR TISSUE DONATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2012
LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI A TRAIT AU DON D'ORGANES OU DE TISSU

Mr. Milligan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 58, An Act to amend various Acts with respect to organ or tissue donation on death / Projet de loi 58, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui a trait au don d'organes ou de tissu au moment du décès.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This topic has been raised several times over the past decade, and on every occasion, the idea of simply requiring applicants for health cards and drivers' licences to complete

an organ donation form has received virtually unanimous consent during debate.

My colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora, a former member from Scarborough East and others have all implored this House to consider the dire circumstances faced by Ontarians on the organ donation transplant list, and this bill offers a tangible means of dramatically increasing awareness of the issue of organ donation amongst all adults in Ontario.

Between today and the day we get a chance to debate this bill in five weeks, another 11 people on the waiting list will have died. In fact, since the concept was first debated in this Legislature, over 1,000 people needing transplants have passed away.

This afternoon, we will be talking about a more comprehensive look at steps that can be taken to increase the number of organ donors, but on behalf of the people on the waiting list today, we simply don't have the luxury of delaying on taking the first step.

PETITIONS

GREENBELT

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's few times I get to speak in this Legislature. I'm starting to feel sorry for myself. However, the petition is from the riding of Durham, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Greenbelt Act was passed by the Ontario Legislature in 2005, affecting property rights in Ontario; and

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"Whereas the right to own, use" and enjoy one's property and "to earn a living from private property is the basis of freedom and democracy; and

"Whereas the greenbelt restricts property owners in the use, enjoyment and ability to earn a living from their" own "private property; and

"Whereas property owners are not being compensated for any loss of these rights" by zoning by provincial policy;

"Now, therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend"—at once—"the greenbelt plan area at the 10-year re-evaluation in 2015 to allow additional development when requested by the community and supported by the local municipality" and is in order. It should be allowed.

I'm pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents and members in the gallery here, and present it to Emma, one of the pages here at Queen's Park.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have been paying over millions in extra charges on their hydro bills to help retire the debt. The amount collected to date as per the Auditor General's report is $8.7 billion, but the amount owing was $7.8 billion;

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking, where is the money being invested?

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking why this was not addressed at the time the debt was paid;

"Whereas electrical rates have increased with the new creation of green energy coming online to include solar and wind, refurbishment of nuclear plants and deregulation of Hydro One;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows to obtain answers to the following" two "questions:

"How much of the debt remains?

"When will it be eliminated from Ontario taxpayers' hydro bills?"

I'll present this to Nicholas, and I fully agree with this petition.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I have a petition from constituents of York South–Weston addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas St. John the Evangelist Catholic elementary school in Weston is overcrowded, with 480 students in a school designed for 260; and

"Whereas the students will be relocating 40 minutes away in September 2012 during the duration of the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; and

"Whereas the Toronto Catholic District School Board has placed St. John the Evangelist third on the urgent capital priority list for 2012;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Respectfully request full funding to replace St. John the Evangelist school during the Metrolinx Weston tunnel construction; therefore, the students are not relocated twice."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it and hand it over to our page, Emily.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the Leeds county Ontario Federation of Agriculture for providing me this petition from their meeting on Friday night. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario livestock and poultry farmers work to ensure their farms are treated and handled with care and respect, and agree that Ontario needs a system to identify and address any exceptions in a timely and effective manner; and

"Whereas there is a growing level of concern with how the OSPCA is currently structured and executing its mandate, as derived from the OSPCA Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act so that inspection and enforcement agents are accountable to the Legislative Assembly and/or a minister through mandatory annual reporting of activities, investigations, enforcement activities, case outcomes, appeals, and the training and qualifications of enforcement staff; legislative provisions enabling entry without a warrant are revoked; the application of the term 'immediate distress' is clearly defined; and the OSPCA's dual role as the enforcer of animal protection laws and a registered charity is addressed to ensure fair and effective enforcement."

I'm pleased to sign it and send it to the table with page Hassan.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^me^ France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of my riding.

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas," since 2009, "insured PET scans" have been "performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

Therefore "we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through" Health Sciences North, "thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, Mr. Speaker, will affix my name to it and ask page Alexander to bring it to the Clerk.

GREENBELT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Greenbelt Act was passed by the Ontario Legislature in 2005, affecting property rights in Ontario; and

"Whereas the right to own, use, enjoy and the opportunity to earn a living from private property is the basis of freedom and democracy; and

"Whereas the greenbelt restricts property owners in the use, enjoyment and ability to earn a living from their private property; and

"Whereas property owners are not being compensated for any loss of these rights;

"Now, therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the greenbelt plan area at the 10-year re-evaluation in 2015 to allow additional development when requested by the community and supported by the local municipality."

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to present this to Domenique.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and I have an additional 1,664 signatures.

"Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates $2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

"Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario's horse racing and breeding industry;

"Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

"Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates $1.1 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

"Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government $1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Call on the government of Ontario to protect the $1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program."

I agree with this and will put my signature to it, and Julia will bring it down.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: This is a petition from a group of parents and students at Avalon Public School in Ottawa–Orléans.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the current enrolment of Avalon Public School is 687 students;

"Whereas the student capacity of the school is 495 students, as determined by the Ministry of Education's own occupancy formula;

"Whereas the issue of overcrowding and lack of space makes it impossible for Avalon Public School to offer full-day kindergarten until the overcrowding issue is addressed;

"Whereas Avalon Public School is located in a high-growth community;

"Whereas the enrolment at Avalon Public School is expected to continue rising at a rate of 10% to 15% a year for the foreseeable future;

"Whereas the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has made building a new school in Avalon a top capital priority;

"We, the undersigned, call on the province of Ontario and Ministry of Education to provide the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board with the necessary funding to build an additional school in Avalon, to open no later than September 2014."

Speaker, I approve this petition and send it up with Emily.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here on the future of 80 long-term-care beds in Tavistock, signed by a great number of constituents from the Tavistock area, and it is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Tavistock's Bonnie Brae Health Care Centre is an 80-bed, D-class nursing home that must be either rebuilt or closed by July 2014; and

"Whereas there is currently an application by a private operator to move the 80 licensed beds outside of Oxford county to the city of London, despite the recent opening of two other long-term-care homes in Middlesex county in 2010; and

"Whereas long-term-care wait times in Oxford county can be as much as 134 days longer than in Middlesex county; and

"Whereas Tavistock receives referrals from the nearby Waterloo Wellington CCAC, which has among the highest waits for long-term care in the province;

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"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario retain these beds in Tavistock and seek partners to fast-track replacement of the Bonnie Brae as part of Ontario's 10-year plan to modernize 35,000 long-term-care beds."

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to present this petition. I will also affix my signature, as I totally agree with it.

EMPLOYMENT RESOURCE CENTRE

Ms. Laurie Scott: The Brock Beaverton community employment centre is due to close.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we are asking for intervention to reverse the decision made by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to close the employment resource centre in Beaverton, Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities of Ontario continue to fund, or find alternative funding for, the employment resource centre in Beaverton, Ontario. This is a vital service for Brock township and a centre point for social assistance in our community."

It's signed by hundreds of people from Brock township. I'll hand it to page Liam.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed; and

"Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

"Whereas Ontario's largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning;"—this is important—"and

"Whereas there have been no third party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government support Huron–Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson's private member's motion, which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third party health and environmental study has been completed."

I'm pleased to sign this petition on behalf of my constituents, supporting it, and to present it to Victoria, one of the pages.

BAITFISH INDUSTRY

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Protect Your Rights."

A petition to "protect the use of live baitfish in Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Natural Resources recognize and work with the live baitfish industry to ensure a viable, quality baitfish product for the anglers of Ontario."

I'm happy to present this to page Domenique.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates $2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

"Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario's horse racing and breeding industry;

"Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the" Ontario Lottery and Gaming "slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

"Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates $1.1 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for" the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp.;

"Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government $1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Call on the government of Ontario to protect the $1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program."

I'm happy to sign that petition, and I want to thank Jeff MacLaren of Tottenham for sending a whole pile of them to me.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which I'll pass to Liam.

"Whereas, on April 22, 2002, Premier Dalton McGuinty signed a pledge in North Bay to never privatize the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission; and

"Whereas high energy prices have forced northern Ontario businesses to close or move, including Xstrata, which had moved its Timmins smelter operations to Quebec and made up 10% of Ontario Northland railway's business; and

"Whereas some 60 lumber mills have closed across northern Ontario in recent years with a loss of 10,000 resource jobs, and Ontario fell from being the number one mining jurisdiction in the world to number 23 due to high taxes and government red tape, resulting in the erosion of Ontario Northland's commercial customer base; and

"Whereas the Far North Act that has banned development and turned much of northern Ontario into a virtual museum is the biggest barrier to new job creation in northern Ontario and cost Ontario Northland business; and

"Whereas the ONTC was completely omitted from the province's northern growth plan issued two years ago; and

"Whereas the former MPP for Nipissing staged an election campaign announcement on September 30, 2011 regarding what is now known to be a non-existent strategic alliance between" Ontario Northland "and Metrolinx; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario on March 23, 2012 announced it would wind down and divest itself of" Ontario Northland "and its assets with no prior consultation with community stakeholders in Nipissing and across northeastern Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, hereby demand Dalton McGuinty come to North Bay, look workers in the eye, and explain why he broke his word and has abandoned northern Ontario."

I'll sign my name to this and give it to page Liam.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for petitions has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AMENDMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ DE PROTECTION DES ANIMAUX DE L'ONTARIO

Mr. MacLaren moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 47, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act / Projet de loi 47, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. MacLaren.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: The purpose of the OSPCA Act is to look out for the welfare of animals and protect them from abuse. Bill 47 will maintain that objective, and all parts of the act that pertain directly to animal welfare and protection will remain intact. The changes that this bill will make to the act will provide oversight and accountability of the enforcement of the act. Currently, the OSPCA operates as a charity that provides sheltering services for animals and has inspectors to enforce the act to prevent cruelty to animals.

The OSPCA Act has one shortcoming: It does not have a provision for the oversight and accountability of the OSPCA enforcement staff. The OSPCA inspectors have police powers to seize animals and lay charges for provincial offences or under the Criminal Code of Canada. All police forces in Canada have oversight and accountability mechanisms in place so that police officers can be held accountable for their actions. This is a

necessary, understood and accepted practice. This change to the OSPCA Act, this entrenchment of oversight and accountability, will ensure animal welfare as well as just and fair treatment of people.

I would like to go through some of the key changes that are proposed in Bill 47. Farm organizations have asked that farm animals be treated differently and separately from non-farm animals. This is a reasonable and sensible thing to do, so we have done it. Farm animals will fall under the jurisdiction of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, better known as OMAFRA. The inspectors for farm animals will be employees of OMAFRA. The inspectors will be required to meet with farm organizations to discuss protocols for entering onto farms—things like biosecurity—and they will be required to learn about normal farm practices and acceptable standards of animal welfare for the different species of farm animals.

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These inspectors will become knowledgeable about farm animals. The inspectors will respond to complaint calls and will enter onto farms with either the owner's permission or a warrant. These are the same powers as the police; no more, no less. The inspector will look at the animals and have the authority to call a veterinarian if abuse or neglect is suspected. The inspector and the farmer will choose a veterinarian that is acceptable to both parties.

If the veterinarian decides that the animals must be removed from the property in the interest of their welfare, he will write a report making that recommendation. The inspector will take that report to a justice of the peace and get an order to remove the animals. If the inspector and the veterinarian decide that there may be abuse or neglect by the farmer, the inspector may then call a policeman. The policeman will decide if it is appropriate or necessary to lay charges.

These changes give enforcement powers to the veterinarian, the justice of the peace and the policeman. These professions are licensed by their professional licensing bodies and are accountable to their licensing bodies for their decisions and actions. This is how the much-needed oversight and accountability of enforcement will be embedded in the OSPCA Act. This will, first, enhance the monitoring of animal welfare and, secondly, provide fair and just treatment of animal owners.

Non-farm animals or small animals like cats and dogs will fall under the jurisdiction of the OSPCA as it is currently structured: as a charity that offers sheltering services and has inspectors on staff to respond to complaint calls. These inspectors will have the same powers as the OMAFRA inspectors. They will enter onto private property with the owner's permission or a warrant. They will look at the animals. The inspector will have the authority to call a veterinarian if abuse is suspected. The inspector and the animal owner will choose a veterinarian that is acceptable to both parties.

If the veterinarian decides it is necessary to remove animals in the interest of the animals' welfare, he will write a report making that recommendation. The inspector will take that report to a justice of the peace and get an order to remove the animals. If the inspector and the veterinarian decide that there may be abuse or neglect by the animal owner, the inspector may call a policeman. The policeman will decide if it is appropriate or necessary to lay charges. Again, this is how the much-needed oversight and accountability will be imbedded in the OSPCA Act.

It should be noted that inspectors will have the ability to get a telewarrant and will have the right to make a warrantless entry onto private property in the case of an emergency. These two rights are currently in the OSPCA Act, and Bill 47 proposes to keep them.

Another very important change will be who hires the chief inspector of the OSPCA. Currently, the OSPCA board of directors hires the chief inspector, and the candidate must be a member of the OSPCA. Under Bill 47, the Lieutenant Governor in Council will have the authority to approve or disapprove the hiring of the chief inspector. This gives the government the much-needed oversight and accountability, by being able to decide who becomes the chief inspector. A chief inspector with a strong background in training and policing and who is fair-minded and unbiased would be essential in order to provide the strong leadership that is required at the OSPCA.

I would like to comment on what effect Bill 47 will have on the cost of policing. The OSPCA and OMAFRA inspectors will be encouraged to respond to complaint calls without police backup unless it is necessary for safety reasons. According to the OSPCA annual reports for the last 10 years, there has been an average of 15,000 complaint calls per year in Ontario, but an average of only 450 charges per year were laid. In Ottawa in 2011, 90% of the OSPCA complaints that the police were called to by OSPCA inspectors did not require the police to write a follow-up report.

Only 3.5% of the police calls involved a criminal charge. Policing costs can be reduced by reducing the number of unnecessary calls.

I want to tell you two stories: a story of tragedy and a story of success.

First, the tragedy: Sunny Reuter of Richmond Hill had her dog Arko taken and killed by the OSPCA. Sunny went on a trip and put Arko in a kennel. Arko had recently been given a clean bill of health by her veterinarian. The OSPCA came to the kennel and took Arko. Arko was an Akbash, a rare breed of dog that is fine-boned and slim-bodied. The OSPCA mistakenly thought Arko was a much heavier-bodied breed and said he was sick and starving. The OSPCA killed Arko that day, the day that Sunny got home from her trip. They didn't call her sister, even though they had her phone number. Sunny was devastated. When the OSPCA was informed of their mistake, their response was to threaten Sunny with criminal charges. This is wrong.

Now for a success story: The Lanark Animal Welfare Society was an affiliate of the OSPCA. They sent a

young woman named Melanie Young for OSPCA training to be an inspector. The Lanark Animal Welfare Society was very proud of Melanie because she had a strong sense of compassion for animals and also a healthy respect for the rights of people. The OSPCA failed Melanie as an inspector. They said she did not have an aggressive enforcement attitude. The Lanark Animal Welfare Society stood by Melanie and divorced themselves from the OSPCA and their aggressive ways.

The Lanark Animal Welfare Society has been an independent, self-funding animal shelter since 1985. Melanie continues her work at the Lanark Animal Welfare Society and is called an animal welfare advocate. She is doing a marvellous job of helping animals and people. This is the right way to do things.

We have strong community support for Bill 47 from farm animal organizations, small animal organizations, community associations, private animal owners and municipalities. Municipalities know that Bill 47 is the right thing to do and are pleased that policing costs won't go up and in fact may go down. Farm organizations are pleased that farm animals will be treated separately and that inspectors will be knowledgeable. Small animal organizations and private shelters welcome the inclusion of professional enforcement. Veterinarians, lawyers and police who have had first-hand experience with OSPCA inspectors tell us that they are pleased to see the more professional approach to enforcement that will be mandated by Bill 47.

One thing that all supporters agree on is that oversight and accountability that would be mandated by Bill 47 is long overdue and absolutely necessary. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I would like a moment to speak to this very important legislation. The other day, I had the opportunity to speak with the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills about this bill, and I can say with confidence that he has the right intention in bringing this motion forward.

There are serious concerns with the OSPCA's current ability to enforce animal cruelty legislation, and to be honest, the penalties are not strong enough for those who violate the act. The problem is that the weakness lies not with the OSPCA, who receive very limited government funding to enforce this act; nowhere is this more apparent than in my riding, where there is, I believe, about one agent in the region stretching from Thunder Bay all the way to the Manitoba border. It's about 400 linear kilometres. I'm wondering, how is it possible that one or maybe even two agents can reasonably be expected to investigate acts that are spanning this vast geography? This is also assuming that animals are only neglected or abused along the TransCanada corridor, which we all know isn't the case. There are many, many communities that don't lie along this corridor, and, in fact, these communities are sprawled across the nearly 300,000 square kilometres. But passing responsibility on to the local police isn't the answer either, because I have concerns about the priority that these complaints have with police and the costs that are associated, as municipalities are already cash-strapped and they're struggling to pay their current policing costs, never mind additional costs.

1350

The fact that enforcement of animal cruelty laws and education and the prevention of animal cruelty is not managed by the government speaks to its priority, and that is unfortunate. It is shameful that, to this point, government has chosen to absolve itself of responsibility by handing it to a third party—a charity without stable, guaranteed funding, at that.

I would argue that the penalties for those caught abusing animals do not go far enough, but I can appreciate the concerns raised by the public about the lack of accountability and oversight of having these complaints managed by a third party, and a charitable organization at that.

That's why, despite my concerns, I have decided to support this bill and to send it to committee. Let me be clear that if this bill comes forward without any amendments, I will have to vote against the bill at its third and final reading. But that said, I think we need a forum where we can discuss the major shortcomings of animal cruelty legislation, and sending this bill to committee may provide us with that forum and give a voice to those who don't have voices.

I want to thank the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills for highlighting some of the very serious shortcomings of this act, as it exists now, and I will vote in favour, as I said, in the hopes of bringing greater awareness to the serious challenges that the OSPCA Act and other animal welfare agencies face in Ontario today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: As I begin my remarks, I would like to state outright that Bill 47 will have significant cost impacts to our government and will fail to protect our animals.

This government has already clamped down on animal abusers by updating and strengthening the Ontario animal welfare laws for the first time in over 90 years. Bill 50, the Provincial Animal Welfare Act, was introduced in April 2008. It was passed by the Legislature in November 2008 and took effect on March 1, 2009. The bill substantially revised and updated the OSPCA Act to provide more stringent penalties for animal abuse and increased powers for the OSPCA to better protect animals.

Through this legislation, we have established the toughest rules in Canada to protect the safety of animals in Ontario. Those caught mistreating animals can now receive jail time, substantive monetary fines or a potential lifetime ownership ban. These tough rules are not targeted at responsible animal owners or those who work responsibly with animals. They only impact those committing acts of cruelty against animals, allowing the OSPCA to respond to complaints of animal abuse. Through this legislation, Mr. Speaker, we have sent a

clear message: Acts of animal cruelty will not be tolerated in the province of Ontario.

If passed, the bill put forward by my colleague from Carleton–Mississippi Mills would have significant impacts on the animal welfare system and will take a step back from the progress we have made in creating the laws to better protect our animals.

First, if passed, this legislation will grind our animal welfare system to a halt. This bill will remove the major tools used by the OSPCA to enforce animal-welfare-related laws in Ontario. It will place the burden on to the OPP, the municipal police and the justice of the peace. This lengthy process may result in significant animal suffering and death. The OSPCA would simply be an observer and would have to refer all matters to the police.

This change in the policing would create an impossible workload challenge for our police officers and the courts, Mr. Speaker. For obvious reasons, such as resource pressures and public savings choices, the police would likely see animal welfare as not being within the core business of their core duties. As a result, animal welfare would fall onto the bottom of the priority list. Thus, Bill 47 would reduce our ability to protect our animals.

This bill would also download the cost to the municipalities. The OSPCA estimates the cost of providing inspection and enforcement services at $10 million to $15 million annually. The cost to do the same work would be much higher for local law enforcement, given the level of pay and the cost of necessary equipment and training.

If passed, Mr. Speaker, this bill would also create unnecessary bureaucracy for the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. OMAFRA will be required to create a new bureaucracy to deal with animal welfare on farms. This will all come at a significant cost. Preliminary estimates show that, if passed, this bill would cost the ministry $4 million to $6 million annually, and it would be required to hire and train 15 to 20 inspectors.

My colleague from Carleton–Mississippi Mills tried to paint a picture that the OSPCA is an abusive organization that does not have proper oversight of its responsibility. He uses minimal examples, and I would challenge him to provide me five, 10 or 20 examples where the OSPCA abused its mandate.

I wonder how the members will respond to the fact that any order issued today by the OSPCA, including animal removals, can be appealed to the Animal Care Review Board, an independent tribunal established under the OSPCA Act. This board has authority to uphold, revoke or modify an order made by the OSPCA.

I wonder how the member will respond to this quote by Dave Stewart, executive director of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, in which Mr. Stewart states: "The Ontario Cattlemen's Association gets few calls from farmers who think the OSPCA oversteps its bounds compared to the number of calls it gets from farmers who need mentors so they can better care for their animals."

I also wonder how the member would respond to the February 15 agreement signed between the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the OSPCA, where both organizations would provide on-farm training sessions in the application of the dairy cattle code of practice. If the OSPCA was such a bad organization, why would the Dairy Farmers of Ontario enter into an agreement with them?

Lastly, I wonder how the member would respond to numerous cases of the great work done by the OSPCA in rescuing animals. I'm just going to give one example. In 2008, the OSPCA conducted an investigation after being contacted by a licensed veterinarian regarding suspicious injuries to two Boston terriers, Abbey and Zoe. Because of this investigation, Christopher Michael Monroe of Toronto was convicted and sentenced under the Criminal Code of Canada for wilfully killing an animal, and additional charges.

You see, the current OSPCA Act is working well in protecting our animals. It does not need to be changed. Most certainly, we should not be passing a law that will reduce our ability to protect animals and create greater work and costs, not just for our government but also for local municipalities.

On this side of the House, we believe that evidence should make sound policy, and the evidence shows that the current OSPCA Act is doing a great job. That is why I will not be supporting this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to speak to Bill 47, introduced by my colleague from Carleton–Mississippi Mills. The member recognized that we have a problem in the way our animal welfare system is working. We have cases being thrown out of court because of improper procedure, and we have people doing inspections who haven't received proper training.

What I want to speak about is from an agricultural perspective, because I hear from farmers and many farm organizations who say the current system isn't working. It is great that so many of them, like Ontario Pork and the National Farmers Union, are supporting this bill.

Animal protection is an issue that needs to be discussed here and in committee so we can make sure that we do it right. I believe that all people on both sides of this bill want the same thing: Our animals need to be cared for, and the people who are abusing animals need to be stopped. We also want to ensure that resources and time of animal owners, investigators and the courts aren't wasted pursuing cases where there really isn't any abuse or harm at all.

Unfortunately, most OSPCA inspectors haven't received enough training with farm animals and agricultural practices to know what is normal and healthy for our farm animals. Since only 10% of their calls involve farms, it makes sense that their focus is on house pets. But then it isn't fair to them, to the animals or to the farmers to give them responsibility for farm animal

welfare. It is resulting in raids where there appears to have been no abuse or need. It wastes resources and creates problems between farmers and enforcement officers.

1400

The Provincial Animal Welfare Act recognizes that there is a difference between how agricultural animals and house pets are to be cared for. The act allows for farmers to care for their agricultural animals in a manner "carried on in accordance with reasonable and generally accepted practices of agricultural animal care, management or husbandry." The problem occurs when those enforcing the law don't know those reasonable and generally accepted practices. They don't understand the needs of farm animals.

When farmers appeal to go to the Animal Care Review Board, a board whose membership includes four lawyers but not a single farmer, how can we ask them to judge what are reasonable and acceptable practices of agricultural animal care? That is why I support this bill to move to separate farm animals from the OSPCA and give OMAFRA, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food, responsibility for inspection of farm animals.

The staff at OMAFRA are experts in farm animals and farm animal care. Let's use that expertise and ensure that we're identifying real cases of abuse and dealing with them properly, and to make sure that we aren't wasting resources and time charging people and taking them to court to find out that they haven't done anything wrong.

The staff at OMAFRA also understand the biosecurity measures that need to be taken on farms. Someone who isn't aware and hasn't been trained could accidentally spread disease from one farm to another. In addition, OMAFRA staff already have inspection ability under the Animal Health Act, so this would eliminate duplication.

I also support the move to require permission of the owner or a warrant to enter private property unless there is an emergency. We need to respect not only that it's private property, but the security and biosecurity rules that need to be followed when entering many farms. They go to great lengths to protect their animals from disease, and we want to make sure that enforcement doesn't mitigate all their work.

When Bill 50, the animal welfare act, was brought forward by this government, we raised many of these same concerns, as did the agriculture groups, and frankly, the government didn't listen. They told us they had addressed those concerns by letting farmers care for their animals in a manner "carried on in accordance with reasonable and generally accepted practices of agricultural animal care, management or husbandry." We now know from experience that without investigators who are trained in those reasonable and acceptable practices, this does not work, which is why we are debating this bill here today.

I encourage my colleagues to support this bill today. Let's get it to committee; let's have farmers, vets and agricultural organizations come forward and talk about what works. Let's let the police talk and find out what will work for them. Let's find a solution that protects our animals without punishing farmers that are giving them good care. Let's find a solution that sees the right people with the right training looking after the protection of our farm animals.

Thank you very much to the member for the bringing this forward, and thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me time to speak.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to take this opportunity to comment on Bill 47 and thank the honourable member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills for bringing it forward. Welfare of animals is a touchy subject, but it's near and dear to my heart because I'm a farmer. Judging by all the emails that I've gotten—and I'm new to this job; I didn't realize so many people wanted to send politicians emails. But judging by all the emails we got, it's near and dear to a lot of people's hearts.

The crux of this issue is agendas, because many farmers believe that the OSPCA has an agenda because of who they're financed by, and those opposed to Bill 47 believe that farmers and veterinarians have an agenda, because quite frankly, we make money on farm animals. So the whole thing comes down to a matter of trust. Who do we trust?

Quite frankly, by some of the emails that I got, I was offended, because as a farmer—farmers love animals. We don't love animals like you might love your dog, but if we didn't love animals, we wouldn't make a living. There are people in the country who shouldn't have farm animals and who shouldn't have pets, and that's why we have rules to protect the animals. But when there's a large section of the population who doesn't trust how the rules are enforced, there's a problem with the rules.

I don't support everything in Bill 47, but I do believe that we have to bring it forward so we have this discussion. I did a bit of research on it. There was a report, the LeSage-Meek report, about a problem the OSPCA had in one area. And you know what? Even the best organizations in the world can have problems. I'm not out here to trash the OSPCA, not at all. But one part of that report said:

"The OSPCA Act gives the OSPCA powers akin to those of a police force, but does not identify an agency responsible for overseeing the OSPCA in its execution of the legislative mandate. The Ontario government should consider legislative amendments to provide for oversight of the OSPCA in order to remedy the current situation of having the OSPCA essentially policing itself."

That's why some parts of the population don't trust it and that's why it should be changed.

This proposed act says—I had it blacked out here somewhere. Anyway, it's going to be the Lieutenant Governor who appoints the chief inspector. That's a pretty big change. That's a change that's got to be very well discussed. But it does kind of follow what this report said. So I think it's a change that should be brought forward and we should talk about it, because it is a big

change, and I think it would make the farm community feel a lot better.

Now, the member across said, "We can always appeal it." But even if it's only one case that goes wrong, if it's a farm case and it's a dairy farmer or a beef farmer, by the time he gets to the appeal process, he's broke. I'm sorry; he's broke.

One other thing: I'd like to commend DFO, the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, for coming to an agreement with the OSPCA, because you know what? They're a progressive organization and they're going to deal with the only people in town, right? You work with what you've got.

Once again, I'm not complaining about OSPCA. I'm complaining that there doesn't seem to be any government oversight of OSPCA—and I think it would actually work better.

One thing in my research—I found out that after the LeSage and Meek report, June 3, 2011, there was a task force struck on animal welfare. It was struck by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. But I couldn't find the results of the task force, so perhaps the members across could explain to me what the results of that task force were. I'm new here, so my research isn't that good yet, but I couldn't find it. And once again—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Maybe it's not there. Maybe there's nothing there.

Mr. John Vanthof: Maybe it is; maybe it isn't.

Again, the argument, "Well, we don't have the money in the ministry, and the way it is now with the OSPCA, it's basically self-financing." That's the part that farmers—most of us—don't trust, because if you have to get your money from fundraising, then your allegiance lies with how you raise the funds.

Once again, I'm in support of bringing this bill forward. I'm not supportive of everything in here and quite frankly, I don't know what the ramifications are of some of it. But we have to bring it forward because the questions that were brought up in the LeSage-Meek report—we're still waiting for the task force. Even if it's only one or two cases, but if it's one or two cases in my riding and I lose one or two farms because I get calls and people are afraid of this—and they shouldn't be. No one should be afraid. If you're doing something wrong, you should be afraid; I've got no problem with that. But people who don't understand what's going on are afraid, and that tells you that there's something wrong with the—and I'll give you an example.

I had a little discussion with one of the inspectors. There is quite a discussion about cattle outside, especially cattle outside in northern Ontario, where it's 40 below. "You shouldn't have cattle outside," but if those cattle have shelter, they're acclimatized outside and they're fed correctly, you know what? They're the happiest cattle on the planet. If you force them inside, they'll all get pneumonia and some of them will die.

1410

Now, I would hate to have to explain that to someone who didn't know what he was talking about, but that's a fact. That's a fact you learn when you're involved in the industry. It's those types of things.

Is that the right way to do it? I don't know. I really don't know. But is the way it's being done now—people yelling at us across the aisle how efficient it is and how great it works. You know what? If it worked that great, we wouldn't have a report of the task force of animal welfare which—I'm still looking for the report. If it worked that great, we wouldn't have that on the books, right? Our job is to make things better for the people we work for.

Once again, even the people who are very much against this act deserve a voice too, because they must be worried too. If you have to fight that hard, and you don't trust the system, if you have to fight that hard to send me emails like, "Farmers are evil and they only care about animals because they're commercial, and you can't trust a veterinarian"—well, there is a college of veterinarians and there might be a veterinarian out there who isn't doing his job. There are some of us in every occupation who aren't doing their job.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Except here in this House.

Mr. John Vanthof: Present company excluded. But the fact is, we have to create a system for animal welfare that everyone trusts. And right now, judging by the emails I got on my machine, a lot of people don't trust the system we have now. At minimum, adopting Bill 47 at this reading will bring it to the committee stage, and if the governing side wants to put something that's much better, based on the report of the task force, I'd be perfectly willing to look at it and help it along. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill. I'd also like to thank my colleague the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills for bringing to light his concerns and the concerns of the farming community through his Bill 47. I'd also like to thank our colleagues here who also spoke.

As a rural member—and we do have a large farming community—this issue has been raised to myself during the election campaign, and we continue to talk about it. I'm also glad that the Minister of Agriculture is going to speak very shortly. I think farmers across the province need to know that we're hearing from them at this time, and we're going to continue to hear from them about the OSPCA and protecting animal welfare right here in Ontario.

This is a very important issue in Ontario, and I think it's a little too important to leave to some of the components in Bill 47. I think that this particular legislation marginalizes the progress that we've made to date. I think it marginalizes the work that we can continue to do as well in animal protection.

It would take protections for animals and make them so complex that actually attempting to help an animal that was being mistreated would take longer and be less effective and more expensive than the current system.

Speaker, farmers know that mistreating animals is not the right thing to do. They also know that treating their animals is vital to their well-being and a healthy farm income. We don't want to go backwards in protecting animal welfare. We want to continue to move forward. We want to work together with our stakeholders in the agricultural community and want to make this system better together. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to rise in support of the member for Carleton–Mississippi Mills and Bill 47. I have to say that he deserves a great deal of credit. He has listened to his constituents, especially those in the farming community, about the fact that the OSPCA Act is deeply flawed and it needs some reform.

He has approached—and he mentioned this in his speech—municipalities, farm and non-farm animal organizations, veterinarians, lawyers, the police, and they have all provided input on this legislation. I think what he's proposing here is something that we need to support at second reading, move to committee and continue the dialogue, because I think all members of this House believe—and if they don't believe, they should—that the OSPCA Act does need an overhaul.

I know that the folks in Leeds–Grenville, farmers in Leeds–Grenville—I know that we have some here in the galleries today. They certainly have given me their concerns clearly. They're concerned, and their fear is, the OSPCA inspectors just don't have the understanding of animal husbandry to properly carry out their duties.

We all have examples. I know we all read the headlines. There was a raid last month on 16 Amish farms in western Ontario where the greatest concern seemed to be the state of a dog having bad teeth. Those actions and many others, Speaker, I suggest would cite and underline the credibility issue that they have with the OSPCA.

So as a number of members have talked about, Bill 47 does allow farm animal inspections to be with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I think what the member is talking about is balance, trying to strike that balance. This isn't an attack on the OSPCA, clearly. It's to change the act and to make it a better act.

I know in my community, I still will support—we've got a telethon this weekend; one of my OSPCA branches is having a telethon. I'll support it, as I always have, as I do the branch in Gananoque. My family's beloved cat Lily was at the shelter, and I have a lot of feeling for that shelter. But that's not what we're talking about. It's that conflict that many speakers have talked about between the enforcement branch and the charitable branch. I think that clearly Bill 47 brings forward that dialogue.

I want to quote, as my final address, from an e-mail that I received, some very insightful comments on Bill 47 from Kurtis Andrews, who is a lawyer specializing in agricultural law. He captured the essence of the issue very well with this observation: "It is my belief that all of the OSPCA-related problems we have been witnessing stem from bad law; and the actions of the society, although often offensive, are not unexpected given the loose language of the statute, unfettered powers bestowed upon them, and inherent (and possibly even unconstitutional) problems of creating a private police force."

I urge the other members of the assembly to support Mr. MacLaren and Bill 47. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to be in my place to speak to this bill today. I want at the outset to thank those who have ventured to express confidence in OMAFRA; that's always good to hear.

As the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, I know this is an important issue for farmers and for our agricultural community. A number of our agricultural stakeholders expressed concerns about the relationship of their industry with the enforcement of animal welfare legislation by the OSPCA. I want those folks to know that OMAFRA is committed to continuing our engagement and discussions with the sector and ongoing forums—the DFO one was referenced—to help understand concerns and respond more clearly and fully. This is consistent, by the way, with the feedback we've been getting at OMAFRA to take this approach.

Speaker, I believe Bill 47 is the wrong approach to address these concerns. Bill 47 would force OMAFRA alone to spend an additional $4 million to $6 million a year while delivering less, and this doesn't include the added cost to municipalities, the police and the courts, which is estimated could be as high as $15 million. No one wants the government to spend money ineffectively, but that's exactly what Bill 47 would require.

Bill 47 would take away the requirement for veterinarians to report suspected cases of abuse or neglect. This is a critically important tool for veterinarians. They are often in the best position to observe the results of harmful treatment, but privacy restrictions prevent them from speaking to authorities unless they have the legislative mandate. In legislation that is meant to protect the most vulnerable, this is like trying to tell doctors that they couldn't or shouldn't report suspected cases of child abuse.

Lastly, Bill 47 and my colleague opposite have perpetuated the misunderstanding about the nature of the OSPCA and its enforcement activity; for example—

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: The bully bill is next. You can talk to bullying next, okay? I want to get through this—for example, by repeating the falsehood that the OSPCA profits from fines. OSPCA in fact receives no revenue from fines, and the member opposite knows this.

1420

Farmers understand better than most that treating animals properly is not only the right thing do; it is a vital part in ensuring healthy farm income.

As Lorne Small of the Christian Farmers said recently, "Animals are not just cogs in the productive cycle. They are a part of creation and deserve to be treated with an appropriate amount of respect."

Let me be clear: There may well be ways to improve our legislation or its implementation. I'm committed to pursuing this dialogue with our farmers, as the DFO has done and others, but whatever problems may exist, Bill 47 will solve none of them. It will spend more to achieve less, it doesn't respect animal health, it doesn't respect farmers and it doesn't respect taxpayers—more downloading, costs and regulations. For all these reasons and others, including a lot of input from the agricultural community, I, and I suspect most people on this side of the House, will not be supporting this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to speak on behalf and in support of Bill 47.

Let me start off by referring to the minister, whom I've never known to want to take on some extra work to begin with, in the first place.

I will say this, Speaker: I know of two members in this House who have actually witnessed an OSPCA raid. There may be more, but I know of two people who have seen, first-hand and in person, the devastating effects of the arbitrary actions of the OSPCA; who have witnessed the ruin of people's lives and livelihoods as a result; seen people's livestock seized and destroyed, and the helplessness that ensues. Those two members are the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills and myself. Does the OSPCA need fixing? You would not ask that question if you had seen what we have seen.

Let me share a little story of my meeting with the chief inspector, Hugh Coghill, a couple of years ago when we met in my office here at Queen's Park. We spoke at length of the SPCA enforcement tactics and the wrongdoing that goes on in the name of animal welfare. Hugh agreed that there were a number of SPCA enforcement officers who were difficult to control and were causing problems for the SPCA.

Three names came up in that discussion: Connie Mallory, Bonnie Bishop and Larry Wilkinson. Unfortunately, Hugh felt powerless to solve those problems. Today, Hugh Coghill is gone, and in his place is Connie Mallory. Yes, the same name as we discussed earlier.

I believe members of this House should also be aware that I have been trying for over two years to meet with the chairman, Rob Godfrey, and discuss the problems. He refuses to meet. Mr. Godfrey chooses not to meet with elected representatives. He believes he's a power unto himself and finds no need to dispense with the concerns of elected people.

The member from Agincourt asked about evidence. Well, how about looking up the Hunter case or the Robinson case, and the cases that were thrown out on constitutional grounds, or the case against Cindy Pauliuk, where Justice Zuraw said, "The Hamilton-Burlington SPCA ... hires its own agents and inspector, determines the parameters of their employment and using police powers, enters property, seizes animals as in this case (without warrant or judicial intervention) ... lays charges—all the while attending to its own need to fundraise. In order to do the latter, it relies heavily on the publicity it can glean from high-profile seizures and charges. Indeed, there is a communications branch" of the SPCA "tasked to do this. It is a not-for-profit organization and a registered charity. Without publicity and high-profile charges, the funds the SPCA needs to operate would no doubt dry up."

The Lanark Animal Welfare Society model is the right model. That's the model that's included in Bill 47. I encourage members of this House to support this bill and bring justice back to not only animals, but to people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Justice Patrick LeSage and Dr. Alan Meek, a veterinarian, were commissioned by the government in 2010 to do a study of the OSPCA and make recommendations for improvement after a mass euthanasia of cats and dogs at the OSPCA's head office in Newmarket became public.

I quote from the LeSage report—it is the same as the member from New Liskeard's, but it's worthy of saying again. "The OSPCA Act gives the OSPCA powers akin to those of a police force but does not identify an agency responsible for overseeing the OSPCA in its execution of the legislative mandate. The Ontario government should consider legislative amendments to provide for the oversight of the OSPCA in order to remedy the current situation of having the OSPCA essentially policing itself."

Carl Noble was a councillor and mayor of the town South Bruce Peninsula for 16 years, was a professional fireman in North York for 25 years and was on the board of directors of the OSPCA for eight years. Carl was one of 29 directors who resigned en masse in 2006 in protest over the change in attitude of the OSPCA toward very aggressive enforcement. They asked government to provide oversight and accountability, but nothing was done. Carl spoke strongly to the standing committee on Bill 50 in July 2008. From Hansard I quote Carl: "We need accountability for and to the people of Ontario."

Bill 47 will provide the oversight and accountability called for by the LeSage-Meek report and by Carl Noble and his 28 colleagues.

I would like to close with a quote from Edmund Burke: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." I appeal to you, the good men and women of this House, to do something. Let us do what is right. Let us support Bill 47.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll deal with the vote later on in proceedings.

ANTI-BULLYING ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA LUTTE CONTRE L'INTIMIDATION

Mrs. Witmer moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to designate Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week in Schools and to provide for bullying

prevention curricula, policies and administrative accountability in schools / Projet de loi 14, Loi désignant la Semaine de la sensibilisation à l'intimidation et de la prévention dans les écoles et prévoyant des programmes-cadres, des politiques et une responsabilité administrative à l'égard de la prévention de l'intimidation dans les écoles.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to the standing orders, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I just want to say how very pleased I am today to bring forward this anti-bullying bill in order to raise awareness and to prevent what we see as a growing problem of bullying in our schools.

I would begin by saying that bullying has absolutely no place in our schools. For whatever reason, whether it is physical, verbal, social or cyberbullying, it is a cruel practice that has far-reaching consequences for the victim, for the bully and for their families.

I want to, at this time, express my appreciation to all those who are here today in support of Bill 14. I'd like to welcome in particular Lynne MacIntyre, the founder of the Guelph Anti-Bullying Coalition. There are about nine anti-bullying coalitions in the province of Ontario, and it is people like Lynne and other members of coalitions and students who have come forward and helped to raise my awareness of the issue, beginning about three years ago.

I'd also like to thank Briar McDonald from Guelph, a student who was here today and participated in our press conference to share her views on making our schools safe for students so that our students could learn. I'd like to thank the other students who are here as well.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague Lisa MacLeod. She is our education critic, and she has been a very strong advocate regarding bullying, not only here in the Legislature but in her home community of Ottawa. She has done an outstanding job in emphasizing the need for us to put aside partisan politics and to make sure that we come up with a bill that responds to the needs of the students in our schools. I say thank you to Lisa.

1430

This bill is the result of advice and stories that I have received from people during the past three years. It includes people like Mike Neuts of Chatham, whose 10-year-old son Myles was found hanging on a coat hook in the washroom of his school and never came home. It includes Katie Neu of Listowel, who was bullied from the time she was in kindergarten, and when she couldn't take it any longer in grade 9, left school and got her certificate online. She now is doing all she can to support other young people who have been bullied. It includes the Hubleys of Ottawa, whose son Jamie took his own life after he was subjected to homophobic bullying. It includes 11-year-old Mitchell Wilson, a Pickering boy, who committed suicide as a result of bullying because of his muscular dystrophy.

This bill is influenced by their stories and the stories of hundreds of other parents, students and teachers who met with me, emailed or phoned to tell me about the impact of bullying on their lives.

This bill was influenced by the high statistics on bullying, such as the survey by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, which states that about one third of students have been bullied and another one third have been the bully; and of course the Ontario Student Trustees' Association 2010 survey of grade 12 students, which found that 46% had either been the victim or the perpetrator of bullying.

This bill is influenced by the far-reaching consequences of bullying on both the perpetrator and those who are bullied. Research shows that those who are bullied may suffer anxiety, depression, substance abuse, low self-esteem and academic failure and, as we hear too often today, commit suicide. However, the research also shows that those who bully learn to use aggression as a form of power and may become abusive adults or become involved in violent crime in later life. Thus, based on the first-hand concerns brought to my attention by students, parents and teachers when I was the education critic, the alarming high statistics of bullying and the far-reaching consequences of this behaviour, this bill is intended to address those concerns. It will enshrine into law my resolution on Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week, which was unanimously passed by this Legislature in 2010.

I want to thank my executive assistant, Dan Powers, for his outstanding work in the preparation of this bill. This bill is also the result of having done research on all of the legislation available throughout North America. The bill focuses on prevention, accountability and awareness. It provides for a formalized process; clear responsibilities; and support for victims, perpetrators and teachers.

Now, you may ask: How does it help prevent bullying, and how is it different? Number one, you will see here a clear definition of bullying. Also, there will be early intervention and incorporation of bullying education into the curriculum. There will be a ministry model for prevention and intervention plans. There will be the provision of services for the victim and the perpetrator. There will be ongoing professional development support for teachers and there will be prompt reporting of incidents and investigations.

What does the bill accomplish? The number one concern for parents was what they perceived to be a lack of accountability and a clear process for reporting and investigating. So this bill makes significance improvements in accountability by mandating that statistics on bullying be kept and tracked by each school, principal, board and ministry, and that these would be reported to the minister and released to the public each year. There would be a clear, articulated process for reporting and investigating, because we do believe that we need a formalized and entrenched process of reporting, monitoring and investigating. This was probably the most serious deficiency that was brought to our attention, not only by parents, but also by teachers.

This bill will remove the ambiguity surrounding the role and responsibilities of the principal and staff. This bill will provide a clearly defined course of action that must be taken when bullying occurs. It includes notifying the parents, and that means both the parents of the bully and of the child who has been bullied. It also requires that, in the event that there's a need for police involvement, the police would be notified. It also provides for support and counselling to both the bullied and the perpetrator, because obviously we want to make sure that the perpetrator becomes aware that that behaviour will not be tolerated and is helped to recognize how that behaviour needs to change. The bill also provides clarity, publicity and education.

The definition that I have put forward is a very comprehensive definition. It also includes a definition of "cyberbullying," which of course seems to be spreading with each day.

As well, the ministry will be responsible for developing an anti-bullying plan. That will be shared with the boards and the schools, and they will also be responsible for developing their own anti-bullying plan, and it will need to be published in student and employee handbooks and made available to parents and posted on websites.

Bullying prevention and intervention will be incorporated into the curriculum, starting in kindergarten. Again, parents will be provided with anti-bullying literature and resources.

So we have before us today a bill that addresses the deficiencies that we have heard are in the legislation as it currently exists in the province of Ontario. We have heard and we have listened to students and to parents and to teachers. In fact, the ETFO has, I know, sent a document to the Minister of Education indicating the parts of our bill that they believe need to be incorporated into Bill 13.

I certainly want to thank all those who, over the course of the past three years, have stepped forward, some with tremendous courage—Mr. Speaker, I've never heard stories as ones I've heard over the last three years: the situations that parents and children have found themselves in as a result of bullying. It really is quite incomprehensible.

So today, we do have an opportunity, and I am optimistic because I've heard the Premier say that he would like us to work together, that he would like us to set aside partisan politics. When we talk about bullying in our schools or in our communities, we all have an obligation to do what we can on behalf of our students.

I hope that we can move forward. I hope that this bill will be supported, because it provides a strategy to raise the awareness of bullying, and that is very, very important. It provides a strategy to prevent bullying; it provides a process to resolve it; and it provides the data for us to learn from it.

So today, I want to conclude by a quote that was used by Lynne MacIntyre in her remarks today, and it's from Maria Robinson. It says: "Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending." I encourage us to work together to do so today on behalf of the students in our schools.

1440

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to rise to speak to this issue. It's obviously a matter of importance, so I thank the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for bringing it up. It's important enough that we actually have two bills before the House right now speaking about bullying. I think they're both worthy of consideration and that the debate is important and must happen here in this House.

Bullying is not something that's easily legislated, however. I think it takes a comprehensive approach to deal with the complicated issues around bullying. I've worked in schools, I've worked as a social worker in low-income communities, and I think the answers to bullying must be comprehensive.

Things have changed a bit since I was in school as a student, for a number of reasons. There are students now more than ever who are judged based on their family's ability to buy them fancy clothes and shoes and commodities, and that wasn't the case as much when I was a kid. I think that if we're going to take a real approach to bullying, we need to include these kinds of social factors as well, to make sure there's a comprehensive approach that deals with inequities across our province.

When I talk to folks whose children experience bullying, it's often because they don't have the same resources when they enter school and go to school, and they've spent their summers without the same access to summer camps and educational experiences as their peers. And when they arrive at school, they don't have the same kind of clothing as their peers.

I have some real concerns about the fact that there is growing inequality across this province and in schools and for students across this province. I have real concerns that children on social assistance a few years ago lost their back-to-school allowance, so people have even less chance to be equal with their peers when it comes to these things.

The other thing that's changed since my time as a student is that I see growing user fees within our school system. This is absolutely opposite to our Education Act, to what it stands for. It means that people who can't afford to eat the pizza lunch that's served at school—because people are paying a user fee to use that—are ostracized. It's very stigmatizing to be a student in a classroom who can't keep up with their peers, through no fault of their own.

I think that any kind of approach to bullying—I'm glad to see the compassion within this House for young people, but I think that a real approach will look at the social factors as well.

I also think we need to support teachers to do their work here as well. We're hearing that there might be as much as—there are cuts to our education system, $500 million of missing money. In my experience, bullying happens when nobody's there to watch. If we're cutting

back on supports in our schools, it means there are more opportunities for bullying to happen.

I will be supporting this bill. I would encourage it to go to committee and to be considered with Bill 13 as well, and that we work together to strengthen this bill. I do have some concerns, though, that we not take a punitive approach to bullying as well. A holistic approach means standing up to make sure that victims are supported in their time of need, but also that we are not only punishing bullies but making sure that they have the supports they need—because often the bullies themselves are the students who need the most support—and to make sure they have options as well, so that we don't go into a situation like we had before with the Safe Schools Act, where people are thrown out of school with no supports around them. That's something that's quite important to me.

I also think we should consult with the researchers on bullying. There's an increasing volume of research being done about bullying. We haven't talked about the role of the bystander in this. I think that supporting the school curriculum to include bullies and victims, but also the role of the bystander in stopping bullying, is quite important.

I think, in the end, we need to look at this. We need to look at the factors around poverty in our school system, around racism and discrimination and homophobia. We need to make sure that students have the supports that they have in the school, that we have sexual health classes that explain the diversity of health factors that people will experience growing up and the different experiences people have. And we need to make sure this is part of a curriculum, that students feel welcome in their schools, that their different experience is allowed for, and to make sure that students have access to GSAs, if they need them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I stand here today very encouraged. I'm encouraged because the members in the assembly are united. They are united to put an end to bullying in our schools and outside our schools.

It is rare, Speaker, and you know that: that on an important topic like this, you will have two bills presented at the same time. That speaks volumes. And both bills are good bills, are strong bills, and have good features in them. But that speaks to the reality that we, as the representatives of the people, which includes our children, are united. To any person, any child, any student who is listening to this debate or may hear of this debate: I want them to know that the hope is here; that their representatives, that the grown-ups, understand the issue that they're going through, understand that they are being harmed, victimized and terrified, and we're working very hard together to find a solution to make it easier for them in their own schools, in their own homes.

That's why, Speaker, it's incumbent on us that we work together as people, not as Liberals, not as New Democrats, not as Progressive Conservatives. All those labels have no meaning when it comes to the well-being of our children. What matters the most is that we realize our responsibility to look after our children, to make sure that they are getting a good education in a healthy environment, and that they are accepted and celebrated for who they are. That's, I think, the environment most of us grew up in. Those are the opportunities that were given to us, and those are the things that we need to realize.

I want to commend the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for presenting Bill 14. I want to congratulate the Minister of Education for presenting Bill 13. I've had the chance, Speaker, to read both of those bills line by line. There are a lot of commonalities in those bills; that's a good sign. There are a lot of things that are similar. There are strengths in both the bills and there are weaknesses in both. I think we can gain so much if, as members, we bring these two bills together, take those strong points and make it an even stronger law that will protect our children.

There's another very important point that I want to make, Speaker, and I think the member from Toronto Centre, the Minister for Training, Colleges and Universities, this morning, when he was speaking about Bill 13, made a very passionate plea about that. The most common, the most basic thing we can do is encourage tolerance. That's just the starting point, Speaker. I don't want to be tolerated for the fact that I have a different faith or different complexion or I speak with an accent. That's just a given. We need to go beyond that. We need to focus on acceptance, that we get accepted for who we are; and then we need to take a step further, and that is celebration, that we encourage each other for who we are and we accept that and learn from each other. Because all of us are different—every single one of us is different—and we all have something to contribute and learn from each other. That is the essence, Speaker, that we need to capture in anti-bullying legislation that will be passed as law by this Legislature.

Be it that you're gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender; be it that you're disabled; be it that you're fat or skinny; be it that you've got freckles or not; no matter what—Muslim, Christian, Jew, no matter—I want to know. I want to learn from you. I want to get to know how things are for you. You hear my story, you'll share your story—I think that's what makes us stronger as a society. That's the province I'm so proud to call home. That's the province that my parents chose to come to from a developing country and make this place a home, because they knew that their children would be equal and would be celebrated.

1450

That's what we need to accomplish through anti-bullying legislation. We need to get to the core issue here. Making plans and all those things are great and they're important. We need to get to the core of the cultural issue here. We know we have a challenge to deal with when we've got protesters outside—and I respect their democratic right to protest, but the fact that there is a protest, or multiple protests out there talking about gays

or not gays, lesbians or this or that: That's a cultural issue that we need to deal with. Because that should not be an issue whatsoever; the issue should be the protection of our children.

So I really encourage, Speaker—and I'm confident. I'm an optimist. I'm extremely confident that the 107 members of this House are going to pull together. They're going to put their heads aside—the Liberal, the Conservative, the New Democrat head—and we're going to bring our best ideas and we're going to produce one of the strongest pieces of law ever produced from any Legislature dealing with anti-bullying so we can really, in a meaningful fashion, help our kids and make our schools that beacon, the incubators of learning where everybody is accepted for who they are and celebrated for their diversity. Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to engage in debate of Bill 14 and to further extend the conversation we've been having in this chamber about bullying for quite some time now.

Before I get into the meat of my remarks, I would like to acknowledge and thank the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for putting substantial thought into practice by placing this bill before us. I would also like to thank the Minister of Education. While we do not always agree, the reality is, she has thought enough about this that she has placed Bill 13 before the chamber, and I do want to thank and acknowledge her for her work in this regard.

The previous speaker is the member from Ottawa Centre. I consider him to be a friend of mine and someone I admire greatly. I know that this issue has impacted him, as it has me, because of something that's been in our community. We've had the opportunity and the good fortune to work together with a parent whose child was bullied, effectively, to death, because he chose to die by suicide. The member opposite and I came together in February to do some work to prevent youth suicide in our community, so we put aside the partisan differences, and I want to thank the member for his work on that.

A few other members spoke this morning on Bill 13, and I was listening from my office. I had a meeting, but I wanted to hear the debate. I would like to acknowledge them, because the members that I did hear speak all spoke about their own personal experiences with bullying. Although we may come from different political parties, the reality is that bullying affects everybody in varying degrees. So I would like to thank the member—the first person I actually heard speak was the member from Pickering–Scarborough East. She talked about her son. The speaker after that, I do believe, was the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and I appreciated his emotional and passionate discussion. It's important that we bring that to this House, it's important that we listen to each other, and it's important we share those stories. That is, I think, probably the good thing that's come out of having two bills on the order paper at the same time dealing with this substantial issue.

Also my colleague from Burlington spoke at length about this, Speaker. Her son has been a victim of bullying. To her credit, she is a new member, and the first thing she did when she became elected is she sent a letter to both myself and to our caucus chair, Mrs. Witmer, asking if we could do something on bullying here in the Ontario Legislature. So I want to congratulate the member, Jane McKenna from Burlington, for talking about that.

But let's talk about the key elements of Bill 14 that are absent, I believe, in the Liberal bill but are very substantial in this bill.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks, Speaker. The member here from Kitchener–Waterloo—a former Minister of Education, a former chair of a school board, a former teacher and education critic—spent well over two and a half years putting together research, conducting interviews, consulting with constituents across the province to develop, I think, probably the strongest piece of legislation on anti-bullying in North America. She put together a bill that includes tracking and investigating of bullying incidents, and awareness, which is very important that we all talk about, which we are doing now. There are accountability mechanisms built in place in her bill, which is very important. As a parent I say that, but also as a legislator that's important.

Something that I believe is very important for all of us to talk about is remediation. Let me talk for one minute about remediation. Let's talk a bit about children who are in elementary school, who may be a bully. We don't want that child to be doomed for the rest of their life and destined to a life where they are ostracized as being a bully and they end up committing some type of a crime. We have an opportunity in this Legislature with this piece of legislation to create the ability for all of us to work together, to be part of remediating some of our children in Ontario.

Speaker, I will cede the floor at this particular point because I do know there are other members from the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus who would like to speak to this important legislation. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I am quite happy to support this bill. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo and I have worked on this issue for quite some time. We've been in similar committees for a long time. She and I were in one committee where we heard horrible stories of bullying on the children of these mothers—because I think they were all mothers, the ones that came in front of our committee. The stories that were recounted talked about the hurt of the children and the hurt of the parents and the failure of our educational system to deal with them. It was remarkable—remarkable, I say, because I

was a former teacher and former school trustee, an education critic for quite a long time. To see those failures not addressed was pretty horrible. You would hear people talking about how processes are in place to deal with it, but the processes that were there did not work.

So Bill 14 is something that I have no problem supporting. Bill 13 is a bill I have no problem supporting either. They actually complement each other, and I would hope that many of the Conservative members would support Bill 13, as I will be supporting Bill 14.

Both contain elements that are supportable. Much of what is in Bill 13 is in Bill 14 as well, with some additions where they define bullying as a severe and repeated harmful behaviour, which I think is a good thing to add; and requiring the minister's annual report to the Legislature to include school board data about bullying incidents, which I think is a very reasonable thing to do. The inclusion of bullying prevention in the curriculum, I think, is good. There are some limitations on that. I want to speak to that in a minute or two—we don't have much time—but it's a good thing.

Clarify—the principal should forward reports on school bullying to the minister; I think this is important. Approval of board anti-bullying plans by the minister, and the development of anti-bullying plans by school boards in consultation with parents—all of this is very positive and helpful, and I believe that everybody in this House is going to be supporting it.

There are some limitations on both bills. Some of you will recall, at least those of you who have been around for a while, that there was a Falconer report that was commissioned. We have never dealt with the recommendations made by Mr. Falconer. I want to highlight some of them, because as the Falconer report made clear, preventing violence in schools requires adequate resources for proper student supervision, adequate funding, community outreach workers to build links with the community, and adequate funding for student supports such as social workers and child and youth workers. None of these bills speak to what Falconer did by way of his report—and, by the way, his report was quite thick.

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It is clear that the Toronto Board of Education that commissioned it couldn't do very much, because they're limited by way of funding. You will know that they have an $85-million deficit that is going to devastate the board, because it means the firing or the loss of 1,000 workers in the educational field, which is devastating. It's difficult for the board to have implemented the Falconer report because they do not have the money, having lost the ability to raise money on their own. because they rely on provincial, central governments for that funding. But we don't speak at all—this bill doesn't speak at all—to that or to the inadequacies of Bill 13, which do not speak to this either.

Unless we address that, we are not dealing with the causes of violence. Nobody speaks to it, and we need to. Why is it that students do that? Neither of the two bills attempt to deal with it. Both bills pass on a great responsibility to boards and educators, without the adequate supports.

Now, I know that my good friend from Kitchener–Waterloo talks about some curriculum support for the teachers, or professional development. I don't see it, but it must be there, because the supports to teachers and to principals at the moment are inadequate. Principals are getting an incredible amount of additional work that both parties have passed on over the years, without the adequate supports. Unless we give them the support, they cannot do the job very well. It's very easy for us to demand they do more. It's very easy to put it in the curriculum. But when it comes to what supports school boards get and what supports teachers and principals get, they are lacking. For too long, boards have had to rely on their scarce resources to invite experts to talk about bullying and what it is they could do about it. They can't do this job on their own without support from provincial governments.

So we need to deal with the causes of violence. We need to understand why perpetrators do this. And, yes, we need to protect the victims, above all. But we have a job to do in terms of how we protect the victims and how we deal with the perpetrator as to why it is that those things happen in the first place. We've got to deal with issues of poverty; we've got to deal with issues of inequality; we've got to deal with issues of racism; and we've got to deal with issues of violence against gays and lesbians in our school system. That is a reality that we cannot avoid. We've got to deal with all of these issues.

Above all, teachers, principals and boards need our financial support. Without it, both Bill 13 and Bill 14 will have a limited effect.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to speak to Bill 14 from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

When I walked in here on Monday, I was very optimistic, because I saw that the order paper for the week had the government bill, Bill 13, beginning to be debated, and I saw that Ms. Witmer's bill, Bill 14, was going to be debated. I think both bills have good ideas. I think there's great opportunity to consolidate the good ideas from both bills, and I was feeling very optimistic. Then we got to the actual debate on Monday afternoon, and that optimism evaporated when we saw what happened with ringing bells and carrying on by the official opposition. I thought, "Where is the spirit of co-operation here?" But on reflection, I do think there are good ideas in Bill 14, and some of us have to behave like grown-ups. I will support Bill 14.

I was very encouraged this morning when we went back to Bill 13 and everybody who spoke to it, I think, was quite encouraging—the member from High Park, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member from Durham, come to order, please. If you're going to heckle, you have to sit in your seat.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I was very encouraged by the debate this morning.

I am not encouraged by what is going on outside this House right now, which is a horrendous homophobic demonstration. But what I do understand is that it is not the doing of the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, who truly cares—

Mr. John O'Toole: There's another remark. It's a values statement. Who made you the expert?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Well that's an interesting comment: Who made me the expert? Because what I was just going to talk about was the fact that I have spent a lot of my time around here chairing a committee, the safe schools action team, that was appointed by the Premier.

The safe schools action team, while it was chaired by me, a politician, was in fact composed of non-politicians. The people who were on the committee included Deb Pepler, who is not just a nationally recognized researcher and expert, but actually an internationally recognized researcher and expert on bullying who works out of York U and Sick Kids; Ray Hughes, who worked at CAMH Centre for Prevention Science—his particular area of expertise is looking at how we implement programs in bullying prevention, and in particular, teaching students to be respectful of each other; and Stu Auty, whom many in the education field will know is the president of the Canadian Safe School Network. Then later we added Lynn Ziraldo, who for many, many years—I think both with Mrs. Witmer as Minister of Education and into the Liberal Ministers of Education—was the chair of the minister's Advisory Committee on Special Education; and Inez Elliston, who was a former member of the board of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation.

We actually produced three different reports. We did three cycles of the province on various different areas of bullying prevention and safe schools work. So there were really province-wide consultations three times, and Bill 13 is actually the third piece of legislation.

So, in response to, "How did I get to have some opinions about this," it's from years of work.

There are a lot of ideas in Bill 14 that I support: Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week; the idea that we need to provide help for both victims and bullies is absolutely essential; the detail that the member has thought through, in terms of bullying prevention plans, I think, is very valuable; and the idea that we'll provide a provincial template, I think, is also very valuable.

What is important to me is that we save the definition that's in Bill 13: "'bullying' means repeated and aggressive behaviour by a pupil where … the behaviour is intended by the pupil to cause" and it goes on with a bunch of legal words "harm, fear or distress"—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: It's a real honour to have the chance to speak in support of Bill 14, An Act to designate Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week in schools and to provide for bullying prevention curricula, policies and administrative accountability in schools.

This bill was introduced last fall—November 30, to be exact—by my colleague the MPP for Kitchener–Waterloo. She brings her experience as a school board trustee, school board chair, MPP for six straight terms and minister of some of the most important and challenging ministries in the provincial government, including Deputy Premier. She brings her compassion and sense of fairness, and most notably today in this minority Parliament, where we need to look for opportunities to work together across party lines, setting aside the hyper-partisanship that occasionally infects this place and make a sincere effort to work together.

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Ten years ago, when the province had a balanced budget and a Progressive Conservative government—the two went together for some reason—the member for Kitchener–Waterloo was the Minister of Education and I was the parliamentary assistant to the minister. Even then she was saying we needed to do something to address the bullying problem in our schools. More recently, she brought forward a resolution in this House in 2010 calling attention to the issue of bullying, as a first step.

And now we have Bill 14. Bill 14 is comprehensive. It is based on thorough research of the best practices in jurisdictions across North America and honest consultation with Ontario educators, parents and students. Bill 14 focuses on prevention, accountability and awareness. It provides students, parents and educators with a strategy to raise awareness and prevent bullying, as well as a process to resolve it, collect data and report to the ministry.

Bill 14 stands up to bullying and addresses bullying head-on. Here's how: It addresses the issues of reporting and investigation of bullying, accountability of school officials and boards to the ministry, education and public awareness to prevent bullying, and remedial action for bullies to teach them that bullying is totally unacceptable. Bill 14 provides for a formalized process, clear responsibilities and resources for victims and perpetrators. So I support Bill 14.

It's worthwhile to point out that Bill 14 is supported by the president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Sam Hammond, and he has written to express his support. I think it's also important to acknowledge the Premier's public statements on this issue, which imply that he believes Bill 14 has merit and his belief that the principles articulated in Bill 14 should be incorporated into the government's bill—that the two bills could be merged.

Let's look at Bill 14 in greater detail. Bill 14, the Anti-Bullying Act, includes:

—a clear definition of bullying;

—early intervention and incorporation into the curriculum starting in kindergarten;

—a province-wide ministry model for prevention and intervention plans;

—the development of detailed school board prevention plans, counselling services for the victim and perpetrator;

—ongoing professional development, parental and community education and consultation;

—publicizing anti-bullying initiatives and policies; and

—reporting of incidents and prompt investigations.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo deserves credit and the appreciation of this House for the work that she's done on this issue and her sincere commitment to creating a framework where every student in our schools can learn without fear.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 14 and to congratulate the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, who has spent a long time developing this bill. Certainly, she had the goal of creating a very robust, comprehensive and hopefully leading bill in North America with respect to anti-bullying. I congratulate her for her work. I congratulate her for what she's done.

I want to state very clearly to this House that when it comes to bullying—and I want to acknowledge some of the things that the member for Ottawa Centre had said. I agree with him that we have to set our partisanship aside, that we have to focus to the greatest extent on making sure that we're standing up for our kids, that we're protecting our kids. That must be the first course of business in this Legislature. It evidently corresponds with a conservative principle, Mr. Speaker. We believe that governments should and can intervene to protect people. It's called the harm principle—the harm principle that I stated and talked about earlier this morning in my comments—from John Stuart Mill, who states, "That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others." I think that's something that we share in this Legislature, a commitment to protecting people from harm. I think that's essentially what we're talking about in this bill.

I also want to acknowledge the member for Wellington–Halton Hills, who talked about our time in government. We also, during that time, introduced the Safe Schools Act, so we were very much interested in protecting our kids from violence in the classroom, and we do that and continue to do that in our deliberations on Bill 13 and Bill 14.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about some of the things that people have said about bullying. Rigby, for example, wrote, in a 2002 book, New Perspectives on Bullying, that it involves simply six criteria: It involves a desire to hurt, a harmful action, a power imbalance, typically it involves repetition, an unjust use of power and, finally—and I think an important one that we should underline—evident enjoyment by the aggressor and generally a sense of being oppressed on the part of the victim.

Certainly, that is the goal of this legislation. This legislation will go a long way to eliminating particularly all those points, but that last line, the "enjoyment of the aggressor," simply shouldn't happen. We have to minimize to the greatest extent possible the oppression on the part of the victim. I think we'd go a long way in helping our kids feel safe in their classrooms.

Finally, in the short time that I have left, I want to also highlight one of the points in this bill that I really think is necessary and important to discuss. It has to do with cyberbullying. I think that the nature of bullying today has changed. It's very easy to put something on the Internet, to spread these rumours very quickly. It's actually permanent, and we can't do very much about that.

I applaud that aspect of this bill, and I'll support it wholeheartedly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo, you have two minutes for a response.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm very pleased to express my thanks to the members for Davenport; Ottawa Centre; Nepean–Carleton, our education critic; the member for Trinity–Spadina, with whom I've spent a lot of time engaged in, hopefully, helping to improve the educational system in the province of Ontario; the member for Guelph, who, like me, served as chair of a school board; the member for Wellington–Halton Hills, who was actually my parliamentary assistant in 2003, and he has reminded me that I had tasked him just before that election with taking a look at how we could continue to do everything possible to prevent and eliminate bullying; and, of course, my newest colleague the member from Cambridge, who represents his riding so very well.

I think it's clear, when we hear all of the comments that have been made in here today, that nobody has a monopoly on being concerned about the issue of bullying and the impact it has on those that are bullied, the negative impact it has on the perpetrator as well and, of course, the families who suffer the consequences.

We do have an opportunity today in this House to pass this bill, and I hope that we will, and obviously, then, we need to move forward. I think it's incumbent upon us to put aside any differences we may have and try to come up with legislation that will ensure that our students can go to school and feel safe, because in order to learn, they need to feel safe.

I would just conclude with a comment in a letter that I received from Karen Sebben and Corina Morrison, both on different anti-bullying coalitions. They say to me here, "To those of you who have had the benefit of being elected into power, dig into your conscience and do what is right for Ontario families. You have an opportunity to collaborate and collectively take credit for doing something positively. Do so, knowing it is for the sake of our children."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote on this item later.

1520

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION
DONS D'ORGANES ET DE TISSUS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should, as soon as possible, establish an advisory committee made up of affected stakeholders to investigate all possible options for encouraging and improving organ and tissue donation in Ontario. This committee should also investigate ways of improving the quality of care provided to those individuals waiting for an organ or tissue donation. Upon receiving the committee's recommendations, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should then move forward with appropriate policy and legislative changes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Jaczek has moved private member's notice of motion number 14. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the outset, I would like to welcome to this debate two constituents of mine who have been truly an inspiration in the formation of this particular resolution. Gerri and Dennis Seeley were hoping to be here today, but were unable to do so, so they're watching at home in Ballantrae.

Too often, Mr. Speaker, we talk about patient-centred care, but seldom do we ensure that this concept is actually operational. My private member's resolution recommends that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care establish an advisory committee as soon as possible to investigate options for encouraging and improving organ and tissue donation in Ontario, and, particularly, to investigate ways of increasing the quality of care for those waiting for an organ or tissue transplantation is one way to do this.

Although I'm loath to recommend an additional committee to the many already established, the urgency of the situation for the many patients on transplant wait-lists is such that I believe further patient input, directly to the Ministry of Health, is necessary to solve the many problems related to patient care in the complex area of organ and tissue donation and transplantation.

After speaking with some of my constituents about their experience of being on the transplant waiting list, luckily receiving a life-saving organ and recovering from the surgery, I heard many interesting insights and opinions about ways the process could be more thoughtfully laid out from the patient's point of view. Recently, a number of media stories have raised similar issues.

Imagine for a moment that you come from a family where many members have had potentially fatal polycystic kidney disease. Perhaps you've seen some family members with failing kidneys spend years on dialysis waiting for a transplant. Perhaps some have died waiting for a life-giving organ, or perhaps you witnessed a family member receive a call that an organ is available, only to have their hopes dashed when it is found to be incompatible.

Surely, you will wonder when your own kidneys will start to fail. How will you reach out to family and friends to donate a kidney? How will you feel about the relatively small number of Ontarians who register to be a donor after death? How will you keep your job when you're on dialysis? How will you survive transplant surgery? What is your chance of a post-transplant lymphoma? You'll wonder whether you should go overseas, where you've read a kidney can be purchased from a live donor.

Some of the ideas my constituents have expressed to me are simple but would make a real difference in people's lives—for example, Gerri Seeley's idea of ensuring that those who register to be a donor be very strongly advised to tell their family of their intention, as it has been shown that this facilitates the speed with which organs may be harvested at the donor's hospital.

An excellent suggestion came from Joe Menna, a constituent of our colleague from Niagara Falls whom he told me about. I'm quoting from a recent article in Niagara This Week, which explains that Joe lost a close family member while awaiting a donor organ. Joe compiled a list of ways to make sure patients who are possible candidates for organ transplants have the proper information available to them to make informed choices when it comes to their medical care. As Joe said, "It's about empowering patients and their families and the public at large." So his suggestion is that wait times by organ, removals from the wait-list and life expectancy after transplant all be available to the public, as they are in BC and in the USA. Luckily, Mr. Craitor was able to arrange a meeting for Joe with Ministry of Health and Trillium Gift of Life officials, who have since agreed to ensuring this information will be available. An advisory committee such as I'm suggesting would allow for creative patient-centred ideas to be brought forward directly to those who can enact the changes.

Another suggestion has been the use of post-transplant patients as volunteer peer supporters to those awaiting transplant. These patients have a wealth of experience that they could use to provide not only emotional support, but practical suggestions to make patients' and their families' lives easier. Post-transplant patients could go into schools, workplaces and clubs to educate students and the general public about the virtues of being a donor.

In summary, the many suggestions that I've heard make me think that an advisory committee that is patient-based would be of benefit to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and subsequently to the agency in Ontario responsible to the ministry for stewardship of all matters related to donation and transplantation.

As I'm sure most members are aware, the Trillium Gift of Life Network was established in December 2000 by the Ontario government. It has assumed the role of Ontario's central organ and tissue donation agency, with the challenge to significantly increase organ and tissue donation across the province and improve related processes and functions.

The Trillium Gift of Life Network has been working hard to fulfill their mission of saving and enhancing more lives through the gift of organ and tissue donation in Ontario. I've met with the CEO, Ronnie Gavsie, and her staff, and have been in communication with a board member, and they are all clearly very dedicated to their work, but they have also expressed their frustration with their need to engage the many jurisdictions that are involved with the process. Charged with such a large task, the Trillium Gift of Life Network has certainly done a good job in increasing the number of donors in Ontario and laying the foundation for a successful program.

The number of registered donors since the creation of the organ and tissue donor registry has more than doubled since 2003. As of December 2011, there are over 2,300,000 Ontarians registered to be donors. But donation rates vary across the province, from a low of approximately eight donors per million people in Kingston to a high of over 21 donors per million in Hamilton and London.

While the newly initiated online donor registry beadoner.ca is proving very successful, with celebrity endorsements boosting numbers quite dramatically, it is estimated that at least doubling current numbers is required to make any substantial difference to transplant wait-lists. Because in Ontario there are approximately 1,500 people waiting for an organ transplant, 1,000 of which are waiting for a kidney, some become so desperate they go overseas where they can purchase an organ. So it is clear there is much more to do.

The Auditor General reviewed organ and tissue donation and transplantation in 2010, following up on the report of the organ and tissue transplantation wait times expert panel of 2009 chaired by Dr. Gary Levy, who is director of the multi-organ transplant program at University Health Network. The Auditor General made seven recommendations, and some have been implemented by Trillium Gift of Life while a number are being worked on by various committees. The problems surrounding organ and tissue donation are very complex, as the Auditor General has outlined, and involve many stakeholder groups. There is no question that Trillium Gift of Life faces many challenges in getting agreement from transplant centres and donor hospitals on common policies and procedures.

I'll give you a few examples. There are 61 hospitals with advanced ventilator capacity, necessary to maintain the viability of organs for transplant in Ontario; yet currently, just 21 hospitals are required to notify Trillium Gift of Life of potential organ donors.

Another example: Consistent clinical criteria have been developed in conjunction with hospitals to assist physicians in knowing when to notify Trillium of potential donors. However, these criteria have yet to be rolled out to all hospitals and relevant physicians.

Furthermore, a consistent set of criteria for non-transplant physicians to use to know when to refer patients to a transplant wait-list needs to be disseminated.

Although these matters sound rather technical, the requirement is quite simply to maximize supply to an unmet demand. Solutions are available and, I believe, should be urgently sought and implemented.

1530

One impressive initiative, led by Canadian Blood Services, is the national paired registry for live kidney donors. A patient who has a willing live donor, whose kidney may or may not be a match for their transplant, can swap with another patient anywhere in the country who may have a more compatible live donor. It is this type of innovative thinking that is helping patients on wait-lists live with more hope.

I've been concentrating my remarks on how the current system needs to meet the needs of patients. However, it is important to note that the costs of transplant surgery are marginal when compared to the costs associated with ongoing treatments for those with end-stage organ failure. For example, each kidney transplant surgery costs approximately $25,000, whereas dialysis costs approximately $70,000 annually per patient. In addition, less than 8% of Ontario's tissue needs were met with Ontario tissue, due to a lack of resources to recover, process and store it. Hospitals have to purchase tissue from outside the province: no doubt, a more expensive proposition. So it is clearly in the best interests of all parties, including the taxpayer, to do everything possible to increase the supply of donor organs and tissues to meet the needs of patients.

An advisory committee that considers all these matters, that includes patients and patient advocates, could provide to the Ministry of Health some oversight of the progress being made in organ and tissue donation and transplantation by actually personifying the urgency of the situation.

I'd like to close by thanking the many individuals and associations who have encouraged me to bring this resolution forward, and this includes so many of my constituents, including Gerri and Dennis Seeley; and also Jim O'Brien, the executive director of the Kidney Foundation of Canada; Joanna Mitchell, the founder of the Live Donation Awareness Association; Jane Tucker, the president of the London Transplant Gift of Life Association and a member of Trillium Gift of Life Network's provincial volunteers committee; Dr. Gary Levy; Dr. Charles Tator; and Karen Philp, executive director of the Canadian Patient Coalition.

I'd like to quote directly from Karen's letter to me: "We fully support your efforts to address effectively the challenge of increasing the donation of organs and tissue across Ontario. We also thank you for your efforts to enhance the quality of life of patients needing an organ transplant, their families and caregivers with your private member's resolution."

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we must move forward and constantly look to ways to improve Ontario's health care system. We must ensure that patients' concerns and needs are put at the centre of the circle of care. I urge all members of this House to support my resolution.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: First off, I would like to thank the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for presenting the resolution today. It's something I also strongly support, and I can say that I will be supporting the resolution brought forward by my esteemed colleague.

This is one of the reasons, Mr. Speaker, why I brought forward earlier today my private member's bill, Bill 58, which is to look at the idea of organ and tissue donation on death, and I would encourage all members of the House to closely look at the bill. I think it's exactly what we need. In fact, in 2003, it was the Progressive Conservative Party which brought forward a bill, very similar, in which it was unanimously debated and accepted. It was the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

To date, we have—one person dies every three days on the waiting list, waiting for organs. In the last 10 years—2003—we've had lots of time. Over 1,000 people have passed on because we haven't moved forward. This is something I think we definitely—all parties can agree it needs to be reviewed and passed as soon as possible. In fact, by myself presenting the private member's bill today—between now and when we're able to debate the bill, May 3, almost 12 people will have passed away waiting on the list.

I would like to commend the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for taking the courageous steps forward, and I would look forward to working with her in reviewing—I think it's an important process. Even though it's my private member's bill, it's not a perfect piece of legislation. As we all know, legislation is not perfect, and it's something that we can work toward and pass.

But I'm asking all parties today to take a serious look at this because it saves lives. I think all parties can agree that that's the right thing to do. So I would like all members to look at this.

You know, it's sort of near and dear to my heart. We've all had family members, neighbours or friends who have been in situations where they could have probably, perhaps—we're not going to save everybody with my private member's bill, but it increases the chances of survival. It increases the chances that they get to spend more time with their loved ones, seeing their children grow up, have grandchildren.

I ask all members today to please support the member from Oak Ridges–Markham in her endeavours to make the system better, but I would also extend an invitation for all parties and all members of this chamber to support my private member's bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^me^ France Gélinas: It is a pleasure for me to speak on behalf of my party about the private member's motion—organ and tissue donation advisory committee—that was put forward by the member from Oak Ridges–Markham. We will, without a doubt, be giving our support to this very worthy endeavour. I thank the member for bringing this forward, as well as my colleague who was just talking, because this is an important issue.

The statistics speak for themselves: 1,505 people are on a wait-list for a life-saving transplant. Make no doubt about it, Mr. Speaker, you're not put on the transplant list unless your life is in danger and your days are numbered. Those people need our help, and I think, with the motion that is put forward, we can do our little part.

Of course there's another little part that we can all do; it's to make sure that we put our name on the list to be an organ transplant donor. I can guarantee you that I am on this list, and I certainly hope that all 106 of my colleagues, including you, Mr. Speaker, have done the same and have signed their cards that say that you will be an organ donor. This is the right thing to do.

I also want to talk to you a bit about two issues. The first one is a very famous young lady who lives in Ontario. Her name is Hélène Campbell. This young lady is becoming famous the world over. She is young. She is witty. She comes from around the Ottawa region. She is full of life. She had to move to Toronto. She doesn't really want to live in Toronto, not because Toronto is not a nice city, but her home is in Ottawa, and that is where she wants to be. The reason why she's in Toronto, Mr. Speaker, is because she is on the transplant list for a double lung transplant.

Hélène has become famous because of some of the things that she did, not to help herself, but really to help people understand the importance of being an organ donor, the importance of signing your card.

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One of the nifty things that she did is that she tweeted to Justin Bieber, and much to her surprise, he re-tweeted it. That simple little act of sending a tweet brought in over 2,000 people to the organ donor list, Mr. Speaker. After Justin Bieber read her tweet and re-tweeted it to his thousands and thousands of fans who follow him on Twitter, the Ontario registry increased almost 800 that day and another over 1,200 the next day—and her work continues. That is phenomenal.

Another thing that she did was make a video of herself. She is as pretty as a button, she is witty, she's always positive; she's always smiling. A friend of hers got a little homemade movie of hers and put it on YouTube, and she forwarded it to Ellen DeGeneres. For those of you who don't watch TV, it is an afternoon show that is watched by millions of people. And here it is, this little 20-year-old from Ontario sent her YouTube video, and Ellen DeGeneres actually picked up Hélène Campbell's video, and she showed her YouTube video on her show. Then, much to everybody's surprise, she Skyped to Hélène here in Toronto. Hélène had no idea that she was going to be talking to Ellen DeGeneres. She thought she was talking to producers about her video, and here she is on TV for millions of people to see. Because of the work of this young woman, again, people started signing their donation cards by the thousands.

What does that mean, Mr. Speaker? Well, right now, Ontario stands kind of at the bottom of the list. Only 21% of us have signed our cards. That compares pretty badly to our neighbours to the south, who are already at 35%,

and many other jurisdictions that are way, way higher than us. What Hélène Campbell has done is that, by making it an issue, by inviting people to think about signing their cards, people actually did it. A lot of people, if you ask them if they want to, say yes. Most people do. There are very good reasons that some people may not want to, but for most people, it really comes down to a matter of, "Has anybody ever asked you? Have you ever taken the time to think and ask yourself the question, 'Would I like to sign my donor's card?'"

This young woman is full of other ideas. If the recommendation of an advisory committee was ever to come to be—and I hope it does—I can tell you that this young woman would bring us tonnes of other ideas. She speaks about birthday parties. A young adult, when they turn 16, is allowed to sign their own donor's card. So she has ideas like, how about we make it kind of a rite of passage? When your 16th birthday arrives—a lot of people go all out on their 16th birthday, with the sweet 16 and all of this—make it a party with your friends. Chances are your friends are about the same age as you, about to turn 16 or 17 and 18, and as they come to your birthday party, make it an organ donor card party. Make it part of your 16th birthday that you have this discussion and you make sure that people sign up.

She is full of good ideas, and I'm sure there are other Hélène Campbells around with the same type of ideas and joie de vivre—and a whole electricity about her, really trying hard, by herself, to move things forward. Just think of what could happen if the Legislative Assembly actually followed the idea of the member, actually pulled this advisory committee together and allowed people like Hélène Campbell and the many, many others out there who have ideas to come and shape policies for Ontario. Maybe Ontario, rather than being at the bottom of the pack—could you imagine the day when we would be at the top of the pack? Because we are on many other levels, Mr. Speaker.

I know that we hear a lot about when our health care system is not working, and long-term care and home care certainly are having a tough time right now, but there are parts of our health care system where we are without equal.

In organ transplants in Ontario—this is a program we can all be proud of. There could be six organs that become available at the same time, because a single person could give, up to six times, the gift of life, and the hospitals in Toronto will spring into action. They will have six ORs ready, they will have six teams of surgeons and nurses ready to go and they will save the lives of six people the same day, the same night, 24 hours a day, 24/7—it doesn't matter.

We are at the top of the game worldwide when it comes to doing a good job in organ transplants. This is a program every Ontarian can be really proud of. This is something we do well. But those teams, waiting with their beepers 24/7, can only do their job if you sign your donor's card. This is how it works.

I have nothing but good things to say about the Trillium Gift of Life Network. They try really hard. They have a huge mandate and they do good work. What we are trying to do right now is really to expand this, to shine a fresh light as to how we can do things better. Because if one little 20-year-old—she was 19 when she started. When one little 20-year-old can change the world, I think this Legislative Assembly has an opportunity to learn from her and learn from people like her.

J'aimerais prendre les deux dernières minutes qu'il me reste pour mettre en lumière une jeune femme extraordinaire qui vit ici en Ontario. Elle demeure à Ottawa. Elle est jeune. Elle est dynamique. Elle est pleine d'énergie, pleine d'idées et très, très, très positive—

M. Rosario Marchese: Et bilingue.

M^me^ France Gélinas: Et bilingue. Oui, elle est bilingue.

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Elle est libérale aussi?

M^me^ France Gélinas: Je n'en ai aucune idée. Par contre, elle doit demeurer à Toronto. Elle doit demeurer à Toronto, monsieur le Président, parce qu'en ce moment, elle est en attente d'une double greffe de poumon. Ça ne l'a pas empêchée d'envoyer un tweet à Justin Bieber, et en faisant ça, elle a été capable d'encourager des milliers d'Ontariens à ajouter leur nom à la liste de donneurs.

Elle a fait une petite vidéo, avec une de ses amies, qu'elle avait mise sur YouTube. Elle a pris sa petite vidéo de YouTube et l'a envoyée à Ellen DeGeneres, aux États-Unis. M^me^ DeGeneres l'a mise sur son programme, un programme qui est vu par des millions de personnes, et encore là, on a vu que des centaines et des milliers de personnes en Ontario ont signé leur carte pour devenir donneurs.

Si une personne de 19 ans—elle a 20 ans maintenant—avec le peu de ressources qu'elle a, était capable d'avoir un impact de l'ampleur qu'elle a eue, imaginez-vous, monsieur le Président, si on allait de l'avant avec l'idée de ma collègue de mettre un comité ici, à Queen's Park, de donner la chance aux jeunes gens et aux plus vieux partout en Ontario qui, eux aussi, ont des idées. Je crois qu'on pourrait faire un grand pas à l'avant.

En Ontario, 21 % des Ontariens et Ontariennes ont signé leur carte. Ça, c'est décevant. Si on veut continuer d'être un leader, il faut faire augmenter ces nombres-là. Puis, l'idée de ma collègue est une idée qui, j'espère, va porter fruit en ce sens. Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today to speak in support of the motion brought forth by the member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

I know the member as a physician, as a mother and a caring Ontarian who has consistently worked collaboratively with community stakeholders to bring forth healthy public policies which improve and protect the health of all Ontarians.

In this brief time I have right now, I would like to speak on the significance of this motion: the portion which advocates for the creation of an advisory com-

mittee of all relevant stakeholders to improve and encourage organ donation in Ontario.

1550

Recently, like the member from Nickel Belt said, there have been some important stories which inform us as to why we need more organ donation in Ontario. On March 21, the Toronto Star wrote a story on Hélène Campbell. Ms. Campbell is a 20-year-old woman from Ottawa who suffers from idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, a chronic, progressive form of lung disease. Her lung capacity, which has been shrinking since diagnosis last October, now sits at 20%. She's in desperate need for a lung transplant and is currently on a wait-list for a double lung transplant.

Ms. Campbell has started an awareness campaign to increase organ and tissue donation registration in Ontario. Having more potential organ donors increases the chances for Ms. Campbell and others on the organ donation wait-list to receive a vital transplant which could save their lives.

Through Ms. Campbell's efforts—she got Justin Bieber to tweet his support. After that, donor registration started climbing immediately, with 1,760 new registrations in Ontario the next week. After her February 16 appearance on the Ellen DeGeneres Show, 5,027 people registered as organ donors the next week in Ontario alone. Before Ms. Campbell started her campaign, typically there were 50 online registrations a day to be an organ donor in Ontario.

Currently, there are approximately 1,500 people waiting on the Ontario organ transplant list, 1,000 of which are waiting for a kidney. Since 2001, 341 people have died in Ontario waiting for a kidney.

It is important that we realize the risks with having such a large wait-list for organ donation. People are willing to take risks, to get surgeries overseas so that they don't have to suffer while waiting for organ donation in Ontario; people like Raul Fain, a Toronto man who paid $105,000 to have a kidney transplant in Kosovo, all because his doctors told him he could wait up to 12 years for an operation here in Canada.

We cannot let our citizens take the risk of pursuing critical surgeries in other parts of the world. We need more organ donors to reduce the wait-list that many currently face so those who need the surgery here can have it in Ontario.

It is estimated that 20% of Ontarians believe they are a registered donor when in fact they only have signed a donor card, and thus are not a registered donor. I hope this advisory council will find ways how we can encourage and inform people of the need to register online to be an organ donor.

Additional improvements can be made in our hospitals, as the member from Oak Ridges–Markham alluded to earlier, in reporting potential organ donors. Currently, only 21 of the 61 hospitals that have advanced ventilator capacity are required to notify the Trillium Gift of Life Network of the potential organ donors. I hope that this advisory council that my colleague is seeking to create looks at ways we can expand this requirement to all 61 hospitals.

Organ donation can have important cost-saving contributions for our health care system. According to the Attorney General's 2010 report on organ donation, dialysis costs approximately $70,000 annually per patient, yet kidney transplant surgery costs the hospital about $25,000.

Organ donations save lives, and it's often the only treatment for people with organs that are damaged through illnesses or disease and would otherwise die. One donor can save up to eight lives.

I'm pleased to support my colleague's resolution, its efforts to improve organ donation in Ontario, and would encourage everyone in this House and in this province of Ontario to register on the organ donors' list: www.beadonor.ca.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to be able to stand in support of this resolution here today to create a committee to improve organ and tissue donation in this province. We all know the importance of organ donation. It's a selfless, honourable act that saves many, many lives every year. In fact, as was mentioned earlier, one donor can save up to eight lives.

Currently, we have over two million Ontarians that are on a list waiting to give organs, and they're registered as organ donors; that list needs to be bigger. Every year, between 400 and 500 transplants are performed, and this year we're already at 260. One of those is a good friend of mine whose life has hung in the balance as he waited for a suitable donor match. That's a terrible position to find yourself in. I saw his life change. I saw his family's quality of life diminish as he waited for a kidney, and perhaps most dramatically, I saw how he and his family suffered while they waited as his life hung in the balance, wondering if he would survive and whether his children would be fatherless and his wife would be a widow.

Not only his life hung in the balance but, as I mentioned, his family's as well. If another person didn't take the time and the effort and the thoughtfulness just to fill out a donor card and register as an organ donor, my friend would likely have died and left behind two wonderful kids and a wonderful wife; and we would be without one really great, active citizen in our community. Those people are in short supply, as we know, in many of our communities.

In the year 2000, our own Elizabeth Witmer saw a need to establish a central organ donation agency and made the Trillium Gift of Life Network happen. Ever since, they've been doing incredible work: planning and promoting supporting activities related to donation of organs and tissue transplant; managing the procurement, distribution and delivery of organs and tissue; establishing waiting lists and awareness for the public; and informing families connected to organ tissue donation.

I'd like to thank my colleagues for recognizing the need for organ tissue donation by establishing this amazing agency, and certainly kudos to the member from

Oak Ridges–Markham for bringing forward this resolution. I think it certainly speaks to the importance of this issue. Anything we can do to further awareness of organ and tissue donation and make sure that actions actually take place to make this happen are a great thing.

I am proud to support the resolution and speak in favour of it and certainly hope that, in the future, all members of this House will see fit to do the same and take a very close look at my colleague from Northumberland–Quinte West's private member's Bill 58 that also speaks to this issue and really seriously give it good consideration.

This is something that should not be a partisan issue. We need to work quickly on this. People are dying every day because they're waiting for organs, and we need to move quickly on this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members who have brought this very important issue to the House today—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Excuse me. I think the time ran out on your previous speaker.

The member from Etobicoke North.

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Merci, monsieur le Président. La transplantation est un domaine important et émergeant en médecine qui mérite l'attention de la Chambre. Ceci est particulièrement important car l'incidence de diverses maladies qui conduisent à la nécessité d'une greffe continue d'augmenter à un rythme exponentiel—par exemple, le diabète, les maladies cardiaques, l'insuffisance rénale et la maladie pulmonaire.

Ce qui est également important de remarquer, monsieur le Président, c'est que ce domaine mérite la réglementation. Sinon, il y a un marché noir considérable, un commerce illégal dans l'échange d'organes.

D^re^ Helena Jaczek, ma collègue représentant la circonscription d'Oak Ridges–Markham, propose une résolution que, de l'avis de la Chambre, le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée devrait, dès que possible, mettre en place un comité consultatif composé d'intervenants touchés pour enquêter sur toutes les options possibles pour encourager et améliorer les dons d'organes et de tissus en Ontario.

Ce comité devra également étudier les moyens d'améliorer la qualité des soins prodigués à ces personnes en attente d'un don d'organe ou de tissus. Après avoir reçu les recommandations du comité, le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée devrait alors aller de l'avant avec une politique appropriée et des modifications législatives.

Le Réseau Trillium pour le don de vie a été créé en décembre 2000 par le gouvernement de l'Ontario et a assumé le rôle de l'organe central de l'Ontario et l'agence du don de tissus avec le défi d'augmenter significativement les dons d'organes et de tissus à travers la province.

Le Réseau Trillium pour le don de vie a travaillé dur pour remplir sa mission de sauver et d'améliorer plus de vies par le don d'organes et de tissus en Ontario.

1600

Chargé d'une tâche de grande envergure, Le réseau Trillium pour le don de vie a fait un bon travail dans l'augmentation du nombre des bailleurs de fonds en Ontario en lançant les bases d'un programme réussi.

Toutefois, étant donné le nombre de parties prenantes impliquées, il s'agit d'une tâche très complexe. Beaucoup de gens restent sur la liste d'attente pour une transplantation d'organe ou de tissus, et d'autres, malheureusement, meurent avant de subir leur opération.

Si vous avez signé la carte donnant la permission d'utiliser tous vos organes après votre mort, vous pourriez sauver jusqu'à huit vies. Le taux de dons varie à travers la province, à partir d'une faible quantité d'environ huit donneurs par million à Kingston, à la plus haute somme de 21 donneurs par million à Hamilton et à London. En 2009, Toronto avait environ 16 donneurs par million d'habitants.

Finalement, monsieur le Président, j'invite tous mes collègues—tous les députés à l'Assemblée législative—à soutenir, à voter et à promouvoir la résolution de ma collègue, l'honorable D^re^ Helena Jaczek, représentante de la circonscription d'Oak Ridges–Markham. Merci, monsieur le Président.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I am pleased to rise today to speak to this motion from the member from Oak Ridges–Markham. And from the member from Nickel Belt, what a wonderful story. We will have your cousin Hélène Campbell in our thoughts.

Ontario families are, as we know, sadly getting used to hospital wait times. Last year, the Minister of Health estimated that Ontarians are waiting for up to 25 hours in waiting rooms across the province. Others outside of the ER will continue to wait because they simply have no choice.

There are an alarming number of Ontarians, nearly 1,500, currently waiting for a life-saving organ transplant. They are waiting because they are out of options. They are facing end-stage organ failure. And readiness matters: These patients cannot afford to miss an opportunity. Every three days, on average, someone on the waiting list will die because of the shortage of registered organ and tissue donors. Nationwide statistics show that there were 1,022 organ donors in 2010. In that year, about twice that many transplants of solid organs took place.

But let's look at the numbers in perspective. In 2010, Canada-wide, there were over 39,000 people living with end-stage kidney disease. Despite the advances of medicine, end-stage organ failure is still an extremely challenging issue for our health care system and unbelievably trying for patients, their families and loved ones. New and promising treatment options continue to arise and evolve, but it is important to remember the practical steps we can all take immediately to make things better today and, in doing so, extend the gift of life.

The Trillium Gift of Life Network, created 12 years ago by my esteemed colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo,

is Ontario's central organ and tissue donation agency, and it is an asset to all Ontarians that should never be taken for granted. Since the formation of the Trillium Gift of Life Network, nationwide studies have shown an increase in organ donors of around 18%. Among living donors, the biggest gains are showing up in the baby boomers demographic and—here's your dose of hope for the day—among total strangers. Trillium network's data shows that Hamilton Health Sciences centre has almost matched its 2011 organ donation numbers already in 2012—another hopeful sign.

But we are still a long way from where we need to be. Organ and tissue donation saves lives. Registering is easy. You can get started now at beadonor.ca. Take a few minutes and save a life today.

I'm going to support this motion in the interest of moving forward, for the reasons I've explained. Mr. Speaker, I would also note that earlier today, my colleague from Northumberland–Quinte West introduced Bill 58, which addresses these same, important concerns. We look forward to all parties supporting the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I just wanted to stand and rise on behalf of the people of Cambridge and the PC caucus to speak to this bill very briefly, although I don't have very much time.

I think it's a very important issue. I congratulate the member for Oak Ridges–Markham for standing up and bringing this motion forward.

I also, in the same instance, want to congratulate the member for Northumberland–Quinte West for his bill that he tabled today.

I also want to say, I think we all have some heart-wrenching stories with respect to organ donors. I do want to say, though, that it's a very emotional issue. I think we've had a pretty emotional day in this Legislature, and we can't forget about that element. We can't forget about that element because the decision to donate organs has to come at the end of one's life, in large part, Mr. Speaker. We have to be sympathetic to those families that are going through a very troubling time. But we have to hopefully understand that, by doing that, by making some pretty significant decisions, we may not have to have other families go down a similar kind of hardship.

So on the basis of that, Mr. Speaker, I support the motion and congratulate the member for Oak Ridges–Markham on her motion.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask members who are having their conversations all over the chamber—it's very difficult to hear the speaker. If we could turn it down a little.

Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: Mr. Speaker, I was really impressed by the member from Barrie and his heartfelt concern over the plight of people waiting for organ donations, and the member from Northumberland's bill, and the member from Oak Ridges–Markham and everybody else who spoke, because it is something that really penetrates families in a way that we could never imagine.

We've all had those cases come to our office. I know I had a case of a woman who was dying and needed a kidney transplant. Somehow, she hooked up with a donor from Australia, and she arranged for the transplant to take place in Cyprus. So the authorities here at OHIP had to verify whether it was legitimate, so they checked out the hospital in Cyprus. They checked out the donor. The donor's parents had to come to Cyprus to check out the young man who was the donor. Anyway, the good end was that OHIP actually covered the transplant in Cyprus. This was excruciating for them and, I know, the people in my office. It must have taken six months to do this, but it shouldn't have to be this way.

As much as the Trillium Gift of Life is doing a wonderful job in difficult circumstances—the doctors, the patient advocates—there is something really amiss in organ donations in this province. There is not a system in place which really gives people who need this life-connecting link the help they need. There's something amiss. It's not working.

I hope that this committee, which, if struck—and I would suggest that there should be a couple of MPPs on it, really, and some patient advocates—that we can find out how to break through this logjam, because, as I said, there are difficult obstacles.

I had one young man, Mario, who has been going through dialysis. He's in his 20s. He's going for—I don't know—about three or four hours of dialysis every day. He got accepted on the donor's list at one of the hospitals in Toronto. He got a donor. By the time he was ready to be operated on, it took so long that the donor withdrew her offer to be the donor. So you can imagine: He was right on the precipice of getting the kidney, and it was withdrawn. So now he had to go back to another hospital, and now he's on the list at another hospital. He's waiting for a donor again, and this kid is 25 years of age.

So we need to do something to break the impasse. There are not enough people who are signing up. It's going to take more than Justin Bieber and these things. It's going to take all of us working together, with all our health professionals, our great doctors, our nurses, to make a breakthrough here so that we can really get people this lifeline. I hope that we all join together, in a non-partisan way, on breaking through this, because it is really hard work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Oak Ridges–Markham, you have two minutes to reply.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd like to thank each of the members that spoke.

To the member from Northumberland–Quinte West: Yes, indeed, I'll definitely be supporting your private member's bill, and thank you for bringing that forward.

To the member from Barrie: You really did a wonderful job in describing your friend's experience and the heart-rending type of situation that he went through.

The member from Burlington: You talked a little bit about wait times. One of the many things that we do need

to actually establish are formal wait times for organ transplantation. We also have five regional wait-lists. What I would like to see is a province-wide wait-list for each organ, which would allow for the highest-priority patient in the province, based on clinical evidence, to receive the first suitable organ available.

To the member from Nickel Belt: always wonderful in terms of sharing the experiences that she's heard of. Thank you so much.

My former colleague, and current colleague, the member for Scarborough–Agincourt, is a nurse, of course. You know the issues very well.

Le député d'Etobicoke–Nord, merci pour vos mots gentils.

The member for Eglinton–Lawrence: again, a story of the excruciating difficulties that some people have to experience.

What we can do in this House is not only, of course, support my resolution, but ensure that we, as individuals, are registered on beadonor.ca. I would urge all members, also, to do what I have done, which is to put the beadonor.ca link on your own website and take every opportunity you can to bring that to the attention of your constituents. I've become very forceful on this with individuals I meet so that we can do something very practical on a daily basis.

Thank you all for your support, and I look forward to the establishment of this committee. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for private members' public business has expired.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AMENDMENT ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ DE PROTECTION DES ANIMAUX DE L'ONTARIO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal with the first ballot item, number 22, standing in the name of Mr. MacLaren.

Mr. MacLaren has moved second reading of Bill 47. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

I believe the nays have it.

Second reading negatived.

ANTI-BULLYING ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA LUTTE CONTRE L'INTIMIDATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Witmer has moved second reading of Bill 14. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to the committee of—

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: The social policy committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill go to social policy. Is there agreement? Agreed? Agreed.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Jaczek has moved private member's notice of motion 14. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Bradley has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1614.

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum
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Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
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Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
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Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
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Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
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MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

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Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
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Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
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Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
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Shafiq Qaadri
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Toby Barrett, France Gélinas
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Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Ernie Hardeman, Tracy MacCharles
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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